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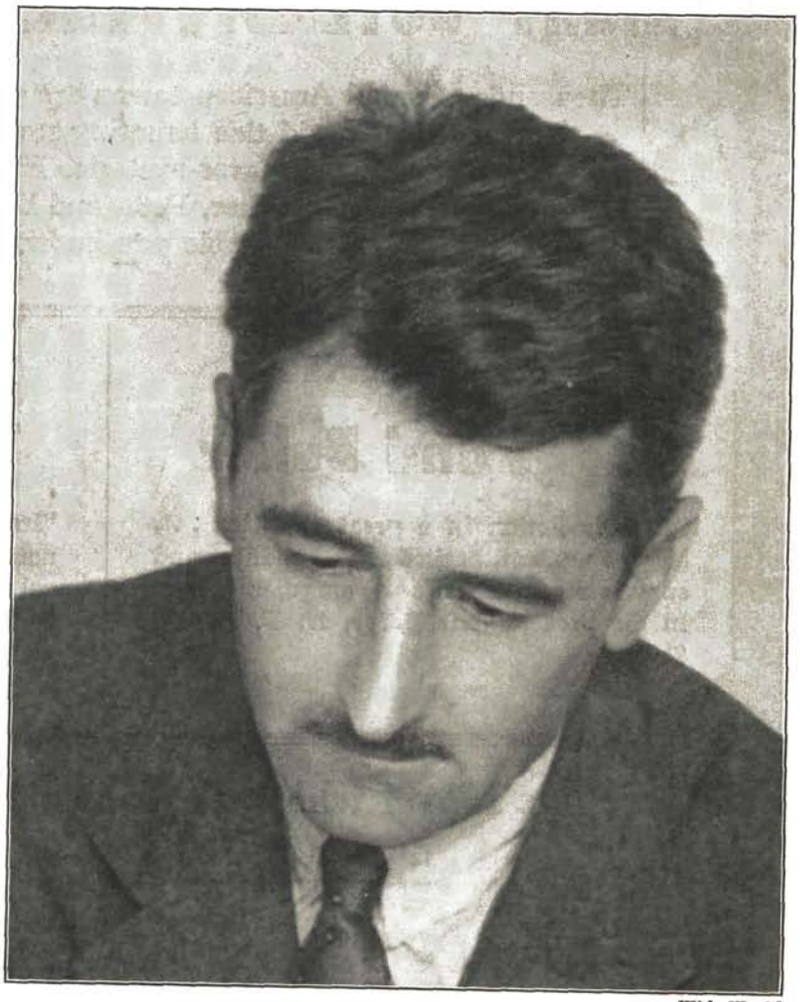

Wide World

WILLIAM FAULKNER

". . . what are they feeling, what are they trying to do, what do they mean? You cannot tell, for you do not know. A fair conclusion is that you do not know because Mr. Faulkner does not know . . ."

(See page 14)

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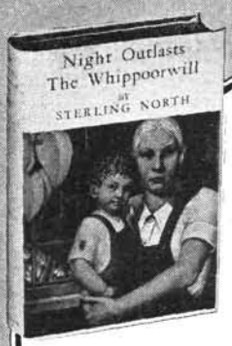

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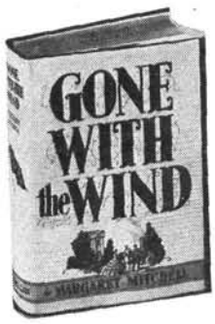

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Witchcraft in Mississippi

BY BERNARD DEVOTO

IT is now possible to say confidently that the greatest suffering of which American fiction has any record occurred in the summer of 1909 and was inflicted on Quentin Compson. You will remember, if you succeeded in distinguishing Quentin from his niece in "The Sound and the Fury," that late in that summer he made harrowing discoveries about his sister Candace. Not only was she pregnant outside the law but also, what seared Quentin's purity much worse, she had lost her virginity. In the agony of his betrayed reverence for her, he undertook to kill both himself and her but ended by merely telling their father that he had committed incest with her. This blend of wish-fulfilment and Southern chivalry did not impress Mr. Jason Richmond Compson, who advised his son to take a vacation, adding, in one of the best lines Mr. Faulkner ever wrote, "watching pennies has healed more scars than Jesus." Quentin went on to Harvard, where, however, the yeasts of guilt, expiation, and revenge that are Mr. Faulkner's usual themes so worked in him that he eventually killed himself, somewhere in the vicinity of the Brighton abattoir. But at the end of "The Sound and the Fury" not all the returns were in. It now appears that only a little while after he was pressing a knife to Candace's throat—I make it about a month—Quentin had to watch the last act of doom's pitiless engulfing of the Sutpens, another family handicapped by a curse.

Mr. Faulkner's new fantasia* is familiar to us in everything but style. Although the story is told in approximations which display a magnificent technical dexterity—more expert than Mr. Dos Passos's, and therefore the most expert in contemporary American fiction—and although the various segments are shredded and displaced, it is not a difficult story to follow. It is not, for instance, so darkly refracted through distorting lenses as "The Sound and the Fury." Though plenty of devices are employed to postpone the ultimate clarification, none are introduced for the sole purpose of misleading the reader, and in an access of helpfulness, Mr. Faulkner has included not only an appendix of short biographies which make clear all the relationships, but also a chronological chart which summarizes the story. If you study both of them before beginning the book, you will have no trouble.

Thomas Sutpen, the demon of this novel, has a childhood racked by the monstrous cruelties to which all Faulkner children are subjected. He has immeasurable will—like evil, will is always immeasurable in Faulkner. He forms a "design": to found a fortune and a family. In pursuit of it he marries the daughter of a Haitian planter, has a son by her, discovers that she has Negro blood, abandons her, and rouses in her a purpose

THE WARLOCK'S DEN (*By Breughel*)
From Summers's "History of Witchcraft and Demonology" (Knopf).

of immeasurable revenge. He takes some Haitian slaves to Mississippi, clears a plantation, becomes rich, marries a gentlewoman, and begets Henry and Judith. At the University Henry meets his mulatto half-brother, Charles Bon, who has been sent there by his vengeful mother, who knows the secret of his parentage, and who is married to a New Orleans octoroon. Henry worships Charles at sight and helps to effect his engagement to Judith. Thomas Sutpen inconceivably does nothing to prevent the engagement till, just before the Civil War, he tells Henry the secret of Bon's birth, though not (and here again the motive is what Mr. Faulkner would call unmotive) that of his Negro blood. Through four years of war Henry remains jubilant about the contemplated incest, but when his father at last reveals the secret he cannot accept incestuous miscegenation, and so shoots Bon when he goes to claim his bride. Henry then disappears and Thomas Sutpen, still demonic, comes back to rehabilitate both his estate and his posterity. He informs the sister of his dead wife (who also was tortured in childhood and hates all men, though she contrives to desire two of them) that if he can succeed in begetting a male child on her, he will marry her. Being a Southern gentlewoman, she declines, and Sutpen begets a child on the fifteen-year old granddaughter of a poor-white retainer. The child is a daughter and so Sutpen's design is ruined forever. The grandfather kills him with a scythe, kills the granddaughter and the child with a butcher's knife, and rushes happily into the arms of the lynchers. The relicts then send for Charles Bon's son and raise him, a mulatto, with further tortures. He rebels, marries a coal-black wench, and begets a semi-idiot, the last of the Sutpens who gives a tragic twist to the title of the novel. The horror which Quentin Compson has to undergo occurs many years later, when Henry Sutpen has crept back to die in the ruined mansion, cared for by the shrivelled Clytie, another mulatto of Thomas's get. Henry and Clytie are burned up in the final holocaust, the ritualistic destruction of the house of hell and doom that is in part repeated from "Light in August."

Mr. Faulkner, in fact, has done much of this before. This off-stage hammering on a coffin—Charles Bon's coffin this time—was used to make us liquefy with pity in "As I Lay Dying" where it was Addie Bundren's coffin. And when Addie's coffin, with the corpse inside, slid off the wagon into the flooded river, the effect then gained discounted the scene in "Absalom, Absalom!" where the mules bolt and throw Thomas Sutpen's corpse and coffin into the ditch. Much of Henry Sutpen's ambiguous feeling for his sister Judith was sketched in Quentin Compson's attitude toward Candace. When Charles Bon forces Henry Sutpen to shoot him, moved by some inscrutable inertia

* *ABSALOM, ABSALOM! By William Faulkner. New York: Random House.* 1936. $2.50.

Next Week

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
By G. K. CHESTERTON
Reviewed by George Dangerfield

THE STORY OF HUMAN ERROR
By JOSEPH JASTROW
Reviewed by Clark B. Firestone

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of pride and contempt and abnegation (or moved by unmotive)—he is repeating whatever immolation was in Popeye's mind when he refused to defend himself against the murder charge of which he was innocent, near the end of "Sanctuary." These are incidental repetitions, but many fundamental parts of "Absalom, Absalom!" seem to come straight out of "Light in August." It is not only that Etienne Bon undergoes in childhood cruelties as unceasing as those that made Joe Christmas the most persecuted child since Dickens, not only that he is moved by the same necessity to wreak both revenge and forgiveness on both black and white that moved Joe, not only that he commits some of the same defiances in the same terms, and not only that the same gigantic injustices are bludgeoned on the same immeasurable stubbornness and stupidity in the same inexplicable succession. It is deeper than that and comes down to an identity of theme. That theme is hardly reducible to words, and certainly has not been reduced to words by Mr. Faulkner. It is beyond the boundary of explanation: some undimensional identity of fear and lust in which a man is both black and white, yet neither, loathing both, rushing to embrace both with some super-Tolstoian ecstasy of abasement, fulfillment, and expiation.

The drama of "Absalom, Absalom!" is clearly diabolism, a "miasmal distillant" of horror, with clouds of sulphur smoke billowing from the pit and flashes of hellish lightning flickering across the steady phosphorus-glow of the graveyard and the medium's cabinet. And it is embodied in the familiar hypochondria of Mr. Faulkner's prose, a supersaturated solution of pity and despair. In book after book now he has dropped tears like the famed Arabian tree, in a rapture of sensibility amounting to continuous orgasm. The medium in which his novels exist is lachrymal, and in "Absalom, Absalom!" that disconsolate fog reaches its greatest concentration to date. And its most tortured prose. Mr. Faulkner has always had many styles at his command, has been able to write expertly in many manners, but he has always been best at the phrase, and it is as a phrase-maker only that he writes well here. Many times he says the incidental thing perfectly, as "that quiet aptitude of a child for accepting the inexplicable." But, beyond the phrase, he now—deliberately—mires himself in such a quicksand of invertebrate sentences as has not been seen since "Euphues." There have been *contentions* between Mr. Faulkner and Mr. Hemingway before this; it may be that he is matching himself against the Gertrude-Steinish explosions of syntax that spattered "Green Hills of Africa" with bad prose. If so, he comes home under wraps: the longest Hemingway sentence ran only forty-three lines, whereas the longest Faulkner sentence runs eighty lines and there are more than anyone will bother to count which exceed the thirty-three line measure of his page. They have the steady purpose of expressing the inexpressible that accounts for so much of Mr. Faulkner, but they show a style in process of disintegration. When a narrative sentence has to have as many as three parentheses identifying the reference of pronouns, it signifies mere bad writing and can be justified by no psychological or esthetic principle whatever.

It is time, however, to inquire just what Mr. Faulkner means by this novel, and by the whole physiography of the countryside which he locates on the map of Mississippi in the vinicity of a town called Jefferson. This community is said to be in the geographical and historical South, and the Sutpens, together with the Compsons and the Sartorises and the Benbows and the Poor Whites and the Negroes, are presented to us as human beings. Yet even the brief summary I have made above shows that if we are forced to judge them as human beings we can accept them only as farce. Just why did not Thomas Sutpen, recognizing Charles Bon as his mulatto son, order him off the plantation, or bribe or kill him, or tell Judith either half of the truth, or tell Henry all of it? In a single sentence toward the end of the book, Mr. Faulkner gives us an explanation, but it is as inadequate to explain the tornadoes that depend on it as if he had tried to explain the Civil War by the annual rainfall at New Granada. Not even that effort at explanation is made for most of the behavior in the book. Eulalia Bon's monotone of revenge is quite inconceivable, and her demonic lawyer is just one more of those figures of pure bale that began with Januarius Jones in "Soldiers' Pay" and have drifted through all the novels since exhaling evil and imitating the facial mannerisms of the basilisk. Miss Rosa (another Emily, without rose) is comprehensible neither as a woman nor as a maniac. Why do the children suffer so? Why did Emily's father treat her that way? Why did Sutpen treat Henry and Judith that way? Why did Judith and Clytie treat Etienne that way? Just what revenge or expiation was Etienne wreaking on whites and Negroes in that Joe Christmas series of attempts at self-immolation? Just what momentary and sacrificial nobility moved Wash Jones to kill three people? Just what emotion, compulsion, obsession, or immediate clairvoyant pattern of impotence plus regeneration plus pure evil may be invoked to explain the behavior of Charles Bon, for which neither experience nor the psychology of the unconscious nor any logic of the heart or mind can supply an explanation?

Well, it might answer everything to say that they are all crazy. As mere symptomatology, their behavior does vividly suggest schizophrenia, paranoia, and dementia precox. But that is too

(*Continued on page* 14)

Ballade for a Bard

THE MELANCHOLY LUTE. By Franklin P. Adams. New York: The Viking Press. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by PHYLLIS MCGINLEY

WHERE are the poets of yesteryear?—
The urban poets, the wags, the wits
To whom we tendered a willing ear
And other tangible benefits?
Where are the boulevard favorites
Who never let anything them dismay?
Gone with the wind, like Hans and Fritz!
But green grow the laurels for F. P. A.

F. P. A.
Caricature by Auerbach-Levy

Where is Hoffenstein, old King Leer?
Where is Parker or Howard Di'tz?
Lost in the Hollywood stratosphere,
Writing pretty palpable hits
For Gary Cooper or Zasu Pitts,
And never a rollicking song sing they.
The laughing muse is a muse that flits.
But green grow the laurels for F. P. A.

Brief is the life of a balladeer,
Pet of Bohemia or the Ritz.
Far more mortal than any tear,
Laughter readily breaks to bits.
Hail him, then, who never submits
To the stanza's rust, to the rhyme's decay!
Safe and sane, in his Tower he sits.
Green grow the laurels for F. P. A.

ENVOI

Prince, while noisier churls and chits
Strum on their harps and have their day,
We'll take Adams and call it quits.
Green grow the laurels for F. P. A.!

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Audubon's American Scene

AUDUBON. By Constance Rourke. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1936. $3.

Reviewed by TOWNSEND SCUDDER, III

ARE there valid reasons for interest in Audubon today? The answer, I believe, is an emphatic "Yes!"

Who was he? Many think of him vaguely as the great American ornithologist. They are mistaken. Many think of him as a romantic figure out of the backwoods who practised an untutored, spontaneous art. They are wrong. Audubon did indeed assume superbly the picturesque role and wear convincingly the dress of the frontier. But no easy formula can be evolved to dismiss him. He may have appeared clear to unwary observers, but he had the complexity of the great artist, a complexity often deceptively simple and almost always enigmatic.

He was born of French parentage—where is still a mystery, but the stock produced genius. He was reared in France during the period of the French Revolution and its aftermath. Not until 1803, when his life in the United States began, did he become American through the process of mastering to a superlative degree those attributes which today are thought of as typical of the sons of the frontier. So, with the difference of being French and a genius, he became the epitome of a conception.

> Today I saw the swiftest skater I ever beheld. I was told he was a young Frenchman, and this evening I met him at a ball, where I found his dancing exceeded his skating; all the ladies wished him as a partner; moreover, a handsomer man I never saw. His eyes alone command attention. His name, Audubon, is strange to me.

An ornithologist is hardly the person to write a life of Audubon. He was both less and more than strict scientist. Nor is the skilled practitioner of the art of romanticizing historical figures. He is fortunate in his present biographer: Miss Rourke, obviously competent as an amateur of nature, escapes the pitfall of concentration on ornithology, and she is too hard-headed—too wise in knowledge of the frontier—to have kinship with those writers who see any colorful figure merely as a tailor's dummy on which to hang absurdly gorgeous clothing. True, she has been unable to resist the temptation to play up one mystery concerning Audubon—the legend that he was the lost Dauphin of France who traded, unconsciously, a kingdom of men for one of birds and forests. "Not proven" is her cautious phrase of retreat. Some readers will regret that Miss Rourke, in bringing the man so clearly to life, has weakened slightly her objective by dwelling on the fantastic legend.

Audubon was a lover of rivers. The stream of his life flows with the Susquehanna, the Perkiomen, the Ohio, the Clear Juniata. He followed their courses. Perhaps the finest passages in this book are those which describe his sylvan Odysseys—poling up the ice-clogged, flood-driven Mississippi, or in the Florida swamps, or sailing along the Labrador coast. And in startling contrast comes the story of Audubon peddling subscriptions to his marvelous achievement, the "Birds of America," among the Lords and Ladies, the wealthy dilettantes of art and letters in England and France.

Audubon's American scene is that of the fabled land of Paul Bunyan. There are flocks of wild pigeons that darken the skies. Not two white swans on a lake, but fifty magnificent trumpeters. Not a little camp-fire in the shelter of a rock, but a bonfire like Rome burning. "Nobody can have any idea of what a good fire is who has never seen a camp-fire in the woods of America," wrote Audubon. "Imagine four or five ash trees, three feet in diameter and sixty feet long, cut and piled up with all their limbs and branches, and then a fire kindled on the top with brush and dry leaves."

AUDUBON'S PLATE OF A GOLDEN-WINGED WOOD PECKER

Audubon's career did not lead him into the dangers of the far Western frontier. His boundary was the Mississippi and his times those when culture was a growing actuality in settlements like Louisville, where many householders had the blood and habits of the French nobility. Natural dangers he did meet, and these he lived through with unerring skill—tornadoes and thunderstorms which shattered the forests, earthquakes which shook the wilderness. What drove him on, besides love of these very things, and of the peace of nature too, was his indomitable resolve to portray the birds of America.

Other naturalists already have and will continue to delineate birds with greater scientific exactitude than did Audubon. But only at rarest intervals comes the genius who is more than painter—more than ornithologist. Audubon was a superlative master of design, as Miss Rourke insists, and into his pictures, moreover, he put life, and motion, and drama.

> My work, I feel assured, will be a standard for ages to come, for I feel certain that with the exception of some few errors, the truths and facts contained in my writings and in my figures of birds will become more apparent to every student of nature *out* of his *closet*.

It is so. But Audubon was a greater artist than he himself realized. And Miss Rourke, in a style rich with the genuine colors of nature, has written, I think, by far the best of the recent books on Audubon.

Townsend Scudder, a member of the English Department at Swarthmore, is the author of "Lonely Wayfaring Man," a book on Emerson.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES MACDONALD FOR "AUDUBON."

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The Making of a Communist

AN AMERICAN TESTAMENT. By Joseph Freeman. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1936. $3.

Reviewed by GEORGE C. HOMANS

SINCE Shelley's day, the poet, the man of letters who is also a revolutionary, has become a more and more familiar character. In the world of the great depression, such men form the most prominent, if not the most numerous, of literary groups. In the same measure, their position has become more and more insecure. Shelley could live in agreeable exile from his own country, and he tried to carry his own vague revolutionary slogans into effect only so far as to make them themes for poetry. The modern revolutionary and intellectual has felt impelled more and more to throw himself into the practical work of agitation and organization. The growth of organized revolutionary parties has been one cause of this development. Though the intellectual has not given up his verse and his literary criticism—quite the contrary—none the less the close juxtaposition of practical revolutionary tactics with the vague aspirations of poetry has made the achievement of emotional unity more and more difficult for him. "An American Testament" is Joseph Freeman's record of the process by which he attained such unity in communism.

JOSEPH FREEMAN

Freeman was born a Russian Jew. As such he was born to the red. Even in the land of promise, where his family brought him while he was yet a little boy, he grew up to the tempo of revolt, in the names of Justice and Beauty, against class and race prejudice. Beyond that, he did most of the things that were expected of a young intellectual in the pre-depression epoch. A graduate of Columbia, he was just young enough to miss service in France in the war. In turn he was a gentleman and bohemian in Paris, with a mistress, and a gentleman and bohemian in Greenwich Village, with a mistress. He read Lawrence and Eliot and underwent psychoanalysis. When dissatisfaction with life in New York took a new form, he made the pilgrimage to Moscow and worked in the Comintern at the crisis of the struggle between the Trotskyite opposition and the party majority. When the chronicle ends, in 1927, Freeman is back in New York, as an editor of the *New Masses*. A characteristic career.

Here reappear all the follies of a decade of determination to be sensitive, intense, and advanced. At one time, "to die happy, one must have seen Isadora Duncan." At another, Max Eastman is willing "to take the risk of accepting" President Wilson as a member of the Socialist Party. Now H. G. Wells is petulant because Lenin "doesn't eat well or love prettily or get children or care for beautiful things." Now Upton Sinclair is explaining at great length that dancing is immoral because it is nothing more than a form of sex play. Such things are quickly forgotten—unhappily, because there is no reason to believe that the intellectuals have grown any wiser, even such of them as have gone back on their old positions. His readers should be grateful to Freeman for the reminder.

It is easy to laugh, but a serious problem is raised by this book. People have observed how often the men who join the Communist Party in America, particularly the intellectuals, are not themselves of proletarian origin. Most of them come from respectable middle-class families. The morality and the verbal schemas of their order cease to have any meaning for them, and they look for new ones. Of one kind of rebel, Freeman is acute in saying: "It is not capitalism that he hates, as a rule, but the responsibilities which any highly developed social system imposes upon its members." But this is not a sufficient statement. If a social system fails to impose its responsibilities upon its members, and the American social system failed in the case of the declassed intellectuals, that failure is a sign of its ill-health. The man who has lost the support of an organized social system always over-talks and over-thinks his problem. He is a kind of obsessive. Accordingly, among the intellectuals the development of new schemas for old was accompanied by a flood of verbiage. The great fault with "An American Testament" is that it becomes much too long by reproducing the verbiage of its era too extensively.

Freeman says that his book shows how an American writer develops "from romanticism toward reality." Is he in fact a realist at the end? Communism is realistic in that the things it deals with, social classes and economic forces, are real things, instead of words, like beauty and truth, but the way it treats of these real things is often unreal enough. The communists are right in asserting that the old order of society is sick, but their diagnosis of its sickness is inadequate, and they go before the facts if they conclude that the old order is corrupt, through and through. If we can judge from what he says in his autobiography, Mr. Freeman does not appreciate that a society is an organism, and that like all organisms, if a threat be made to its mode of existence, a society will produce antibodies which tend to restore it to its original form. Nor does he show any understanding of the loyalties which move millions of Americans—to family, to school, to college, to a local social order—in spite of the fact that the experience of the last few years has indicated that society's most vigorous antibodies are the secretion of such ancient sentiments. The communists must conquer not only society simple but society fortified against attack, and this may well be a task beyond their powers. They speak of fascism and counter-revolution, but do not in fact discuss them realistically. Why should they? Revolutionists are not sociologists. Revolutionary theory must give them confidence in their ultimate victory and slogans to keep alive their fighting spirit. Also, since modern men like to think that they are realists, it is well that they be convinced that these slogans represent the facts. But convincing people that the slogans correspond with the facts and making these slogans actually so correspond are, and must be, two different things.

Within these limitations, which are its author's limitations, "An American Testament" is an honest, intelligent, and illuminating book.

Chaotic Lives

THE WAR GOES ON. By Sholem Asch. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1936. $3.

Reviewed by CHARLOTTE MOODY

WE learned from "Three Cities" that Sholem Asch was a novelist of great vitality and talent, capable of interpreting history through characters who were characters in their own right. His new book is fully as significant and fine a work, very difficult to write about without falling into such phrases as "broad panorama," "rich tapestry," "colorful canvas." Some of the ideas in his new novel will be familiar to readers of "Three Cities," for here again are wealthy Jews who hope for security and tolerance in a hostile society by becoming Christianized, and here again, by implication, the theory that "men make revolutions, revolutions remake men."

SHOLEM ASCH

"The War Goes On" deals with the inflation in post-war Germany, ending with Hitler's unsuccessful Munich coup, the stabilization of the mark, and the desperate hope for better times. It is the story of a great many people, notably of

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the speculator Aron Judkewitch who had narrowly escaped execution in Russia and of the wife he bought; of the Bodenheimers, a family of Jewish bankers, and of Hans Bodenheimer, son of the head of the house, who had been baptized a Christian. The novel is about finance and the Jewish problem, but it is primarily a picture of a bewildered, despairing people with the world twisting and turning under their feet, all their values turned upside down, starving while potatoes rotted and margarine went rancid in speculators' cellars.

The author is most successful when he is being most a novelist, when he is telling history by means of his characters, less so in the more general chapters interspersed through the book. The well behaved Bodenheimers gobbling their food and hankering after whipped cream is a more telling reminder of the food shortage of the war years than any statements or statistics could be; old Frau Bodenheimer worrying about the fish that had cost thirteen thousand five hundred marks, Hans Bodenheimer's difficulties at school and his tortured attempts to make decisions are far better inflation charts than a treatise on the difficulties besetting a man of mixed blood—at least in a novel.

Not that the chapters on financiers in Danzig, food speculators in Holland, Berlin going gay, "the man with the black beard," "Death's Prophet" haranguing a crowd in a Munich beer cellar where "they were all come to loose the Middle Ages on earth again" are not fascinating reading. But, artistically, these chapters on the Money God and the man with the black beard, passionately vigorous though they often are, are rather thorns in the novel's side. The author who can make Dr. Heinrich Bodenheimer, in a rare moment of honesty, cry ". . . we've lost more than our good name. We've lost Germany!," who can write so well of a hungry postman fawning on a Jewish butcher for a marrow bone in return for a letter he has delivered and dreaming the while of the day when the accursed Jew will be put in his place; who can show the baffled incredulity with which a German Jew who has toadied to Gentiles and been humiliated by them all his life observes the bearing of a communist on a visit from Russia, an Eastern Jew who has self-assurance and composure and authority, need not have recourse to such means.

It is a question, of course, just how far the reader helps the author in a novel of this sort. We are wise after the fact. The love affair of Hans Bodenheimer and Lotte is tragic even for the little time it is idyllic; we know what it means when Hintze, the postman, tries to explain a new idea to the mechanic Spinner, a new idea about just what an Aryan is. It isn't a question that can be answered. It need not be when a book has the force and impact of "The War Goes On."

PETER FLEMING'S CAMP. *From "News from Tartary."*

He Writes What He Sees

NEWS FROM TARTARY. By Peter Fleming. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. $3.

Reviewed by GEORGE E. SOKOLSKY

PETER FLEMING is a master of the disappearing art of objective reporting. He doesn't write as he pleases; he writes what he sees. What he sees may or may not please him. Often it obviously displeases him but he tells it anyhow because it is in the story.

And that is why his "News From Tartary" is one of the most impressive volumes that have come from Asia in many years. It is unadulterated reporting. It is honest reporting, brilliantly written and candidly truthful. And what a relief it is from the argumentative propaganda on all sides of every question that appears in so called Far Eastern literature.

This particular volume deals with the center of Asia and, therefore, with a part of the world that is hardly known. It is a great area for which China, Russia, and, at times, Great Britain have been contending. It is possessed by a congeries of races from the mass of people who, at various times, have poured into China, India, and Europe in rages of conquest and, their conquering finished, have receded to their home land. Turks, Chinese, Tibetans, Tungans, Mongols of various description, races forgotten or hardly known, fill an area of the earth's surface which is hemmed in by the earth's highest mountains, where they can retain tribal customs which seem to be unaffected by the main currents of our civilization.

In such a region, human nature operates at times devastatingly, and Mr. Fleming tells his tale with the accuracy of a reporter who knows only what he sees and sees all that there is to see. It is refreshing and exciting.

All those who study the Far East carefully devote themselves to what they call Japan's theft of Manchoukuo. But while Japan has been taking Manchoukuo and perhaps part of Mongolia, Soviet Russia has been pursuing an equally imperialistic policy in Turkestan. This policy has been as ruthless as and perhaps even more effective than that of the Japanese in the East. At any rate, Chinese Turkestan has become a Russian sphere of influence and will obviously, sooner or later, become Russian territory. The struggle against Russia is not being conducted with any efficiency by the Chinese, but the native tribes, particularly the Tungans, are meeting them, with, however, inadequate success. These people are Moslems and if anyone knows the Chinese Moslems, he knows that they will fight to extermination before they will submit to conquest and, therefore, we can expect trouble in that area for years to come.

Of course, little news of it will appear in the daily papers and perhaps the only accurate and informing presentation of this situation that exists today anywhere in any book will be found in Mr. Peter Fleming's book, "News From Tartary." Owen Lattimore has done some excellent work in the same region, but Lattimore, like Sven Hedin, tends to science while Fleming remains throughout a reporter.

If I were to curb my enthusiasm for this book only because a reviewer should be aloof and judicious, I should be doing a great injustice. It is rarely that a book runs away with its reader so that you can not stop reading it, so that you must know what happens next and yet, we have here not a novel or an adventure story but straight reporting, a verification that the truth can be stranger and is often more interesting than fiction.

George E. Sokolsky is the author of "The Tinder Box of Asia."

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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Unemployed Writers

IN order to anticipate an accusation that would be altogether irrelevant but is likely to be made because people's emotions are linked together by irrational bonds, the writer declares that he believes society must provide, by governmental action if other action fails, opportunity for every employable citizen to support himself. Economics, sociology, and ethics agree in holding that the health of the state depends on everyone's having both work and an income from work. They do not, however, hold that it depends on everyone's doing the work he wants to do. The generality of mankind have always had to do just such work as they could get to do. Luck, privilege, accident, and native ability have enabled a microscopic minority to choose their own vocations, but in general men have worked as they could, taking such occupation as might be, and accepting a less desirable one when they proved unqualified for the one toward which their desires were set. That is a hard fact but it seems likely to be a finally determining one until such time as the struggle for existence may be rescinded. Which brings us to a question: what is an unemployed writer?

A carpenter may be out of work because he is a bad carpenter; he may also be out of work because there is no work for carpenters to do. But a writer can never be out of work because there is no work for writers to do. He may be out of work because he is too good a writer. He may be unable to support himself, that is, because the kind of writing he does is appreciated by so few people that he cannot sell enough of it to give him a living wage. Poets, for example; there probably have not been half a dozen *good* poets in all history who lived by the sale of their verse. Historians, philosophers, and writers of speculative essays are in a somewhat similar case. But writers of fiction and drama are not, and neither are those who write literary journalism, comprehending in that loose term the many occupations that call for skill in informing, enlightening, or entertaining the public. Editors and publishers can never get enough good writing of those kinds; they are sufficiently various in their tastes and prejudices to assure the publication of any good book that may be written, and the public demand for good writing is insatiable. Making all allowances for vagaries and mistakes, for fashion and vulgarization, it is roughly true that within these fields a merit system obtains. Subject to the shortcomings of the social consciousness, good writing prevails over bad and the good writer succeeds.

Outside these fields neither society nor writers themselves have expected literature to support itself. One thinks offhand of a leading poet today who is a farmer, another who is a doctor, a third who is a lawyer, a fourth who is a jeweler, a handful who are lecturers, a double handful who are college teachers. It is almost impossible to imagine a historian or a philosopher outside of a university; it is quite impossible to imagine one without some other means of support besides his books. Such people earn their living at some other job, and few have ever expected to earn it by their pen. Others, all too few it may be, have been given political or industrial sinecures, or have supported themselves by ancillary service to literature in publishing houses. An undetermined number may be supported by the indirect patronage of wealthy lovers of literature; still others receive incomes from foundations. Society thus sets up an unofficial Civil List, and it is extended to a number of novelists and dramatists whose work is too esoteric, too obscure, too difficult, or too uncompromising in method to attract wide public support. But a Civil List, especially an unofficial one, is based solidly on the merit system. A university might hire a poor poet who was a good teacher but it would never hire a poet purely as a poet unless he was, in the judgment of the university, a good one. The judgment of a patron or of a foundation may be faulty but both intend to award their funds to good writers. Let us define "good" as at least "skilful," including as much more as you please: the writer who is to succeed in open competition or who is to succeed where the canons of competition do not apply must be a good writer.

What of the others? Society has always disregarded them. So long as they supported themselves at something else, it has granted them perfect freedom to dress, act, and talk like writers, to call themselves writers, and, if they liked, to subsidize the publication of their work. It has, however, enforced a ruthless survival test: apart from the Civil List, if writers were bad writers, it would not buy their work, would not support them. The result has been that, after a certain amount of labor and heartburning, bad writers have usually been forced into other occupations. Society's attitude has been that no one can become a writer by assertion, but only by works. It has lost a certain amount of good and therefore socially desirable writing, no doubt, by discouraging a few who only needed a longer apprenticeship. But also it has protected itself against an enormous amount of bad writing, which has no social value whatever. For the arts differ from other work in this: that elsewhere a clumsy workman may still produce or help to produce usable commodities, but there is no use on earth for bad art.

All of which suggests a disturbing dilemma, now that the Writers' Project nears the end of an altogether praiseworthy endeavor and must find something else to work on. The various guide books were not in the least a literary undertaking, and in fact a great part of the writing and editing has had to be done by expert writers who were not on relief. In the presence of human need, it is not possible to demur on the basis of a person's vocation. But on the other hand no one becomes a writer by merely calling himself one, and as further projects are prepared for unemployed writers, it would be well for someone to determine what an unemployed writer is. He may be a writer too specially talented to be supported by the public, and too unfortunate to be acknowledged by the Civil List; or he may be a writer who was once good and who has lost his art, or one whom a shift in taste or fashion has left technologically unemployed. If he is any of those, then certainly society must recognize him as a writer and act accordingly. But also he may be a writer only by desire—he may be just a bad writer, and if he is there is no social use for him as such. Society may acknowledge its responsibility for him as a citizen, but it has never in the past accepted responsibility for him as a writer, and there seems to be little reason why it should now.

Ten Years Ago

"There can be no doubt in my mind that the two most exciting books I've read lately are Ellen Glasgow's 'The Romantic Comedians' and William Bolitho's 'Murder for Profit.'" The quotation is from Christopher Morley's Bowling Green in *The Saturday Review* for October 30th, 1926; it continues: *"Miss Glasgow's novel is one of those phenomena curiously rare in America, a really witty book. . . . There are a half a dozen younger writers who are conscientiously supposed, by their publishers, to be the cream and bubble of mulled vinegar; it is odd to see how extraordinarily turbid and thick they appear alongside the acid elixir of Miss Glasgow's book. . . . Bolitho's 'Murder for Profit' is less easy to speak of. . . . Shakespeare and De Quincey would have revelled in it. It requires a strong stomach; mere dabblers in anguish, such as readers of the tabloid press, could hardly carry it."*

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Letters to the Editor: *Second Report on Local Reading*

Reading in Pennsylvania

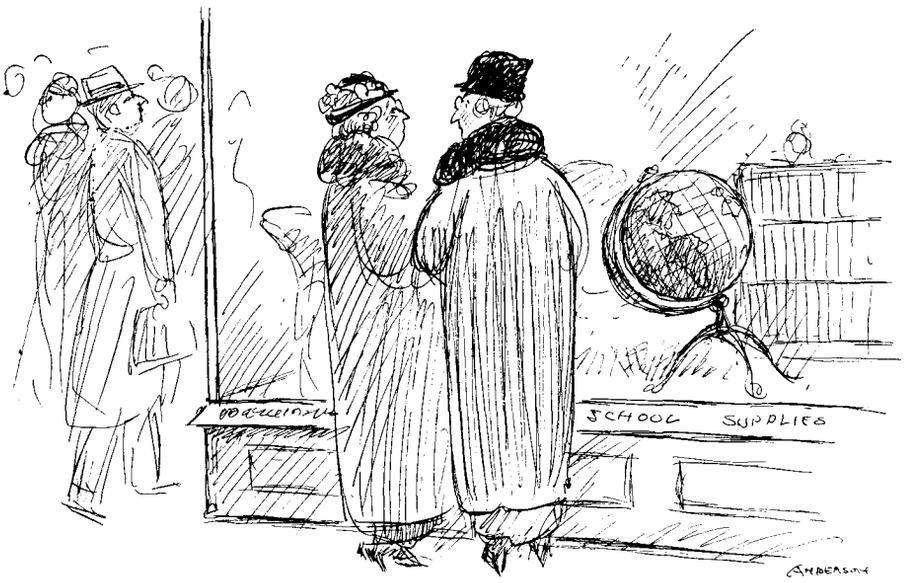
SIR:—Your editorial of October third interested me greatly since, as supervisor and somewhat freelance organizer for a group of department-store libraries, my work is exactly along the lines referred to in the article.

But why do you say that "the librarians have no voice," or aren't you concerned with libraries of the department store type? If you think it would be at all pertinent I can tell you something of what people read in Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Buffalo, Allentown, Williamsport, Altoona. I do happen "to know how many copies of 'Gone With the Wind'" are in use in these towns, and a little about the size of the waiting lists for this book. Stocks and waiting-lists seem to tally—say from forty to eighty. Scranton had the most fun with this book, and for a time we were confronted with reservations there which went well over the hundred mark. At the same time "Eyeless in Gaza" was going well—we were managing with five or six copies! "Gone With the Wind," of course, has beaten all rental records. Also we have been forced to sell copies over the library desk, and by now it's an old story that the customer "lost the book," or "dropped it in the bath-tub." Sometimes we wonder!

Since the publication of sundry "check-lists" we feel that literary taste in outlying towns has tended more toward standardization. Even so, the book which is somewhat off the beaten path enjoys a certain vogue. Usually the single copy—which is adequate—is worn out in the cause. I refer to such books as "Tortilla Flat," "The Circus of Dr. Lao," "Land Under England," and "The African Queen."

Buffalo, naturally, enjoys "Drums Along the Mohawk" and "Listen for a Lonesome Drum" and "Three Bags Full," but they are almost as popular in the Pennsylvania towns mentioned. A popular library will use ten or so copies each of such titles. From six to ten is about the right number of copies needed of "Big Money," "Sanfelice," "Eyeless in Gaza," or similar best-sellers. "I Am the Fox" has been enormously in demand, although the more discriminating reader thought it something of a tour de force. However, exactly the same type of woman reader asked us for it who had clamored for "Sparkenbroke" and "The Last Puritan" earlier in the year. In spite of the astonishing popularity of "The Last Puritan" I am convinced that the average woman who rented this book didn't read it. I have yet to encounter one of our book-snobs who would discuss the book at all when returning it. On the other hand men who rented it talked about it. Men thought "The Thinking Reed" terrible, and our women readers loved it. Definitely a woman's book, we concluded.

As hinted above there seems to us to be enormous regimentation of a certain type of woman reader who withdraws popular books for the fun of obtaining and displaying them. This sort return the book with exclamations of "marvelous" and all that, but we feel that if there is a point she misses it. This group did read "Sparkenbroke," however, which is perhaps the reason I didn't like it.



"BY THE WAY, WHAT'S H. G. WELLS DOING NOW?"

Then we have with us, if we are fortunate, a group of readers which is really appreciative, which enjoys such books as "The Flowering of New England," "Three Worlds," "Mainland," "Rich Land Poor Land." In turn, we enjoy these people. This group keeps us on our toes. They seem a shade or so removed from the people who ask for "An American Doctor's Odyssey" or "Man the Unknown," but I don't know why. It must be, however, that readers of these last very good books tend more to read the popular titles.

We use our own daily check-list of titles selected for established or expected popularity, increasing or decreasing quantities of each title from day to day. The list is compiled in New York. I realize that the towns mentioned are not so very far away, but they aren't New York! Nevertheless the only variations from this New York list are those of quantity. The list of titles does not change at all appreciably. At least, that's my experience.

Some of this year's popular books will no doubt be forgotten next—except by librarians, who will remember gratefully "The Rolling Years," "Fires in May," "If I Have Four Apples," and "The Roofs of Elm Street." They had a long, steady pull, and a record of customer-satisfaction. "Here Lies a Most Beautiful Lady" made rental history. Books like these are the librarians' delight. "Gone With the Wind," on the other hand, is the librarians' nightmare! How to buy enough copies to fill the demand (it can't be done!) and yet not stock too many when, if ever, the demand falls off! There's no answer. I've never seen anything like the demand for this book. Its success, in spite of some pretty silly characterization and stereotyped conversations, must be due to its wide appeal and a certain vivid quality of writing—it's just another thing I can't analyze! There's an indefinable breathlessness about this story which bowls over all classes of readers, and I am convinced that in this case they do read the book! Since it appeared, and we have been shovelling it over the counters, I have heard just one person say she didn't like it. She was a Northern woman who made her home in the South!

Here are some titles which we expected would do well: "Education Before Verdun," "The Green Lion," "The Golden Peacock," "The House in Paris," "Faster, Faster." From a rental standpoint they didn't. It isn't necessary to tell how well "Wake Up and Live" and "Live Alone and Like It" have rented, or, for that matter, "Around the World in Eleven Years."

We do some newspaper and radio reviewing. In the towns herein mentioned our opinions are somewhat heeded, and we notice definite response to such advertising. Thereupon our customers clamor for the books reviewed, unless our opinion is unfavorable. It *is*, occasionally, in the interests of integrity. (Good business, also, because we feel we are thus building customer-confidence.) The shining exception to this is Allentown. Here, if we say we don't like a book, these Pennsylvania German citizens read it immediately. They say they want to see why we didn't like it! Allentown likes to be independent, Scranton wants the very newest titles quickly, Wilkes-Barre and Williamsport readers are discriminating and use wide variety in titles, Altoona keeps abreast but will read older books if they are good, Buffalo seems most nearly cosmopolitan. But customers there are prone to say "don't give me that, it's too radical"! But in the last analysis they all read much the same books at the same time.

RUTH S. HUTCHISON.

Allentown, Pa.

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Grant's Secretary of State

HAMILTON FISH; the Inner History of the Grant Administration. By Allan Nevins. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1936. $5.

Reviewed by DEXTER PERKINS

WITHOUT doubt the shoddiest administrations in our history were those of Grant and Harding. They were bad enough, Heaven knows; but it is a cheering thought that even these two Presidents made some appointments of distinction, and that under both the foreign policy of the nation was in strong hands. There is little doubt that Charles Evans Hughes will be rated as one of our ablest Secretaries of State; and, now that Professor Nevins has written this remarkable biography, it will be easier to award to Hamilton Fish a similar measure of praise.

Fish lacked utterly the valuable political gift of self-advertisement. Since most of us believe of a man what he believes of himself, and since Fish never bothered to proclaim his own merits, or even to act dramatically, it is easy to do him less than justice. Students of the period have remembered, too, that at the outset of the Grant administration he went along with the President in the unsavory project for the annexation of the little republic of Santo Domingo, a project which Grant adopted innocently enough, but which reeked with the intrigues of land-speculators and other selfish economic interests, and was, on the part of the Dominican President himself, little more than a selfish scheme to keep himself in power. But Professor Nevins puts this episode in a wholly new perspective. On the Dominican question Fish let himself be led; but he reaped a rich reward in the far more important questions of Cuba and the Alabama claim. In the case of Cuba, Grant was leaning towards the recognition of the belligerency of the insurgents who had taken up arms there in 1868; Fish used the Dominican matter to tie his hands; after all, the United States could not undertake to risk a breach with Spain while it was busy annexing Caribbean islands. In the case of the Alabama claims, too, Fish profited from his complaisance towards the President; Charles Sumner, the cantankerous chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, had grandiose notions of using British negligence during the Civil War, and the escape of the Alabama and other Confederate cruisers, to extort from Great Britain the cession of Canada; and his obstinate attachment to this idea threatened to make a settlement with that country impossible. But Sumner and Grant quarreled over Santo Domingo; the Senator was removed from the chairmanship of his committee; and these events helped to prepare the way for Fish's greatest diplomatic triumph, the submission to arbitration of an issue which had embittered Anglo-American relations for years.

HAMILTON FISH

In important matters, events played into Fish's hands; yet it would not be at all fair to him to assume that his diplomatic successes were fortuitious; in the Cuban business, which dragged out through his whole eight years in office, he showed patience, skill, and self-restraint; and so did he, too, in his relations with Great Britain. He made his concessions, as every statesman must, to the public mood; but he strove consistently to moderate and steady, and not to inflame, opinion. In the opinion of the reviewer, Professor Nevins goes a bit too far in claiming for Fish that he checked what might have been a premature movement of expansion, but his coolness and restraint are none the less admirable because they were not the only factor in the development of a foreign policy of accommodation, and not of ambition.

As Grant's administration lengthened, Fish became steadily more influential in domestic matters; he supported Grant in his opposition to the expansion of the paper currency in 1873; he helped to bring him toward a moderate policy toward the South, and to limit the use of government troops there; he stood by the President loyally in his admirable policy of neutrality in the hectic months following the disputed election of 1876. He made, errors, of course; he was disingenuous in relating the circumstances which led to the recall of the historian Motley from the Court of St. James; he failed in vigor in the case of Schenck, Motley's successor, when this man used his official position for private gain; and it comes as a shock to the reader to discover that, after frequent proofs of Grant's ineptitude in the choice of men, and after the scandals of Grant's second term, he was ready to see the hero of Appomattox nominated for a third term in 1880. This last, indeed, is one of the most inexcusable judgments of his career.

ALLAN NEVINS

Professor Nevins, thanks to his study of the Fish papers, has been able to bring out more clearly than ever before the shameful character of Grant's domestic administration. One cabinet member impeached; another who certainly ought to have been; a third who connived at corruption; a fourth who was lax, if not criminal; this is a record indeed. And this was not the worst of it. The President's obstinate loyalty to men who abused his confidence; his dislike of the incorruptible Bristow; his willingness in the whiskey scandals actually to thwart the course of justice by making it impossible to use culprits as state's evidence; his ridiculous proposal to send Schenck back to Great Britain after that minister had been disgraced; his use of the secret service funds; all these shed a lurid light on the administration. The story is told with a wealth of new detail; and it is not likely that it will ever be told more vigorously or convincingly.

Professor Nevins is that none too common phenomenon, a professional historian, yes, even an academician, who knows how to write; his book is no work for specialists, though specialists can profit from it; it is sure to be read with pleasure by those whose interest in history is less esoteric. There are charming bits of social history mingled with its biography, shrewd thumb-nail sketches of individuals, excellent longer analyses of the leading figures. And in its central task, the task of giving us a new perspective on Fish himself, the book is eminently successful. It will stand as one of the best of the author's works, and that in itself is the highest praise.

Dexter Perkins is Professor of American History at the University of Rochester.

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The Bowling Green by Christopher Morley

Mother Goose At Election

[*Prophecy Rather Than Partisanship*].

THE Forgotten Man, sometimes known as Uncle Sam, was living on charity, when he found a Depreciated Dollar. He said, "What shall I do with this Dollor? I'll go trading with it and see if I can earn my living." So he bought a little business and set to work.

But the little business came to a sharp corner and refused to go round it. The Forgotten Man tried and tried to coax his Depreciated Dollar round the corner, but it seemed impossible.

So he looked about and saw a Doctor of Political Economy. The Forgotten Man said, "Doctor, I feel terrible; won't you please give me a Shot in the Arm, or Prime the Pump, so I can get Round the Corner and see the More Abundant Life."

The Doctor said, "I wish I could, but I'm busy treating a Banker. He's got jitters and gout, and he's so sore at being called an Economic Royalist that his blood-pressure is dangerous."

The Forgotten Man went a little farther and saw Nine Old Men on a byway in an oldfashioned buggy. He said to them, "Please will you reassure the Economic Royalist so he can dismiss the Doctor so the Doctor can cure me and I can get Round the Corner." But the Nine Old Men were absorbed in arguing whether they were on the right road or not. Four of them said they were, but five of them insisted that the road they were on wasn't even marked on the map. "Probably not," said the Forgotten Man; "that map dates from the 18th century." They were so occupied with argument they didn't even hear him.

So he went farther and out in a field he saw a Donkey, who showed signs of agitation and ill treatment. "Please," he said to the Donkey, "won't you hitch up to the buggy so the Nine Old Men can get back on the highway? Then they can reassure the Banker, the Banker can dismiss the Doctor, the Doctor can attend to me, and I'll get Round the Corner."

"Nothing doing," said the Donkey. "Hauling Nine Old Men in a buggy is a serious business. Besides I'm not in shape. They've turned me out of my good old stable, I haven't anywhere to go, and I'm just out for a walk." He uttered a characteristic sound and took a characteristic attitude.

The Forgotten Man went farther and met a Labor Leader, to whom he said "Can't you build a fire under that Donkey so he'll hook up to the buggy? Then the Nine Old Men can get back on the highway and reassure the Banker, the Banker can dismiss the Doctor, and the Doctor can attend to me. It's absurd to have things stand still like this and *I* want to get Round the Corner."

But the Labor Leader said, "Buddy, my boys are out of work and on relief, the Stores won't give them credit, things are pretty tough and *I* can't help you."

The Forgotten Man was getting so interested he almost forgot his own distress. He hurried to the Storekeeper and told his predicament. And the Storekeeper said, "How can I give credit to the workmen, there's too much credit already. Everything is so uncertain I can't collect my accounts and the Farmers are broke and being paid for not raising produce. Taxes are ruining me and I've got to have cash."

The Farmer said, "I can't sell stuff to the Storekeeper because I need it myself; I'm worrying about the Dust Bowl and the Brain Trust and the A.A.A. and this Economics of Scarcity; I can't even afford gas to drive to town to go to the movies. I stay at home and listen to the radio and read *The Literary Digest* and I get scared worse than ever. Everybody is promising me everything, and it sounds ominous."

By now the Forgotten Man was feeling rather despondent, but he saw a Newspaper Editor, and said: "People are nervous, why don't you give them some distraction, something to take their minds off their troubles? Then maybe the Farmer will get back his courage and supply the Storekeeper, the Storekeeper will give credit to the Laborer, the Laborer will build a fire under the Donkey, the Donkey will haul the buggy, the Nine Old Men will reassure the Banker, the Banker will dismiss the Doctor, the Doctor will prescribe for me, and *I'll* get Round the Corner."

And the Newspaper Man said, "I've been trying that right along. We've given them the troubles of Europe, and football, and Round the World in 18 Days, and Mrs. Simpson, but it just deadens the pain temporarily. I'm sorry. Try the Broadcasting folks."

On his way to the Broadcasting Station who should the Forgotten Man run into but Big Jim Farley who was just prowling about to see if anyone had been overlooked. "Jim," said the Forgotten Man, "you've got a sense of humor, why don't you make a talk on the air and see if you can't cheer people up?"

"Nix," said Mr. Farley, "I'm not a speechmaker, I prefer to do my stuff off the record. Besides, I've got hay fever; I think it's all these sunflowers. I'll tell you a better idea to give the folks a laugh, put the G. O. P. on the air. Or better still, Al Smith and Father Coughlin."

The Forgotten Man has a keen sense of fair play, and he thought this was rather tough on Governor Landon, a modest man who has been sadly embarrassed by enthusiastic political bedfel-

TRAVELLING LIBRARIES (A YOUTH ADMINISTRATION PROJECT)
Children in Albany County, N. Y.—their first glimpses of other than schoolbooks.

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lows who insist on sleeping with him. But while the Forgotten Man was pondering, the G. O. P. had already bought some high-priced air and were packing it with syllables. They had plenty to say about the sins of the New Deal, but they didn't seem to offer any very original plans of their own, and when they tried to frighten the audience by telling them that the New Deal was really Communism, almost everybody began to laugh.

That was all to the good, but still the Forgotten Man wasn't Round the Corner. So he went straight to canny old Franklin Himself, and said "Frank, I'm in trouble. They all say that everything I try to do is Unamerican. The Farmer is scared and won't sell to the Store, the Store won't give credit to Labor, Labor won't build a fire under the Donkey, the Donkey won't budge the Nine Old Men, the Nine Old Men are confusing the Banker, the Banker is in the sanitarium with the Doctor, the Doctor can't pay attention to me, and I'll *never* get Round the Corner. You better go on the air yourself. This is a different kind of world nowadays and it needs new ideas. *You* tell 'em."

And F. D. R. said, "All right, if you'll keep The Family quiet a few minutes, I WILL."

So the Wonderful Voice sat up to a microphone and began. "My friends. . . ."

People listened. Some of them said, He makes castor-oil taste like a cocktail. Some gritted their teeth in silence. Others gritted them in public. The Harvard boys emitted an inherited boo. Al Smith and Father Coughlin lost their tempers and said absurd things that the newspapers printed, and Big Jim Farley got over his hay fever. The Farmer began to think there might be an idea behind the A.A.A. and the P.W.A. and the C.C.C. and other costly and blundering projects. The Farmer sold to the Store, the Store gave credit to the Worker, the Worker built a fire under the Donkey. The Donkey pulled the buggy to a modern arterial highway where the Nine Old Men got into a streamline car. This so startled the Economic Royalist that he threw his crutches at the Doctor of Economics, who quit the patient and remembered the Forgotten Man. The Forgotten Man was able to get Round the Corner, and he reached the polls before closing time.

Subscription Rivalries

It isn't only politicians who carefully scan the various States at this time of year. About this season we usually report on the standing of the various commonwealths in the matter of *Saturday Review* subscriptions. The order of the first ten States remains much as before, with one exciting change. If we remember correctly, there was some doubtfulness last year as to whether Connecticut could hold the lead she gained over Michigan. She couldn't. Michigan has again taken 8th place in—we were about to say—the Long Grind. Minnesota still stands 10th.

There is a substantial rise in the figures in almost all States, but we feel it is only fair to warn Mississippi that her number of subscribers has stood still since last year. Utah, the native State of the new Editor, is only 7 behind Mississippi, and it is rumored that a strong sporting effort is to be made in this matter.

The standing of the Big Ten is now:—New York, California, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey, Michigan, Connecticut, Minnesota.

Gallons of Tall Talk

CALEB CATLUM'S AMERICA. By Vincent McHugh. New York: Stackpole Sons. 1936. $2.50.

Reviewed by WALTER BLAIR

AT ten, Caleb Catlum, carrot-haired, seven feet tall, born in 1798, began adventures lasting a century. He galloped ahead of the frontier, helping other Catlums make American history, pausing frequently to caress a willing wench or to down gallons of liquor. Here Caleb, like Whitman—or somewhat more like Munchausen—celebrates himself. Since the Catlums he aided included Boone, Crockett, Mike Fink, John Henry, and other folk heroes, Caleb can thus summarize his bull-throwing epic: "The whole rolling shindig of American history ain't nothing but part and parcel of the Catlum saga and I got a humdinger for every step of the way."

Mr. McHugh's character challenges comparison with earlier American tall tale spinners. He does not come out well by comparison for three reasons: When Mr. McHugh invents yarns about folk heroes, because he does not understand the heroes as well as did their creators, the tales have less illusive power. When he flecks nineteenth century vernacular with modern slang, his language misses the authentic juicy flavor of talk in earlier tales. Finally, when he introduces a humdinger every few paragraphs, he shows he has failed to learn from old-timers the virtue of restraint. Such makers of tall tales as Crockett, Thorpe, and Clemens had this virtue: they knew the secrets of change of pace, of climactic development, and of brevity.

Faintly phony because the synthetic new hero and the synthetic adventures of old heroes do not ring any truer than the language describing them, this book bogs down after half its course because it shouts too consistently and because the simple allegory which makes the Catlums represent the American people does not alone supply enough diversity. Tall talk is a strong draught, and six fingers are better than two gallons. A few chapters are diverting, but thereafter comes a boredom.

Walter Blair is in the English department of the University of Chicago. He is an authority on American humor and co-author of a book on "Mike Fink."

The Magic Flute

MORE POEMS. By A. E. Housman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc. 1936. $2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

IN this new volume of poems by Alfred Edward Housman (the last, and gathered posthumously), one finds again a triumph of brevities, though I think Housman's poetic triumph will not prove brief. Laurence Housman, the brother, has selected the inclusions with due regard for the poet's wish, as set forth in the preface. He has been keenly aware of his double responsibility, to his brother's reputation and also the reader. One poem is given in "two complete variants." Alternative readings to several poems supplement the volume, together with a list of the dated poems compiled from the author's note-books. There is a fine holograph facsimile of the poem beginning "Tarry, delight—." Incidentally a misprint distinguishes the first edition. Under the frontispiece portrait the name of the artist is given as Francis Todd, at the end of the preface as Francis Dodd.

The poet took leave of us last in the role of a flute-player for country dances, bidding us "praise the tune today," since

> To-morrow, more's the pity,
> Away we both must hie,
> To air the ditty,
> And to earth I.

Now the fact is accomplished, and the notes diminish in the distance; but the quality of the playing is undiminished in art. There are fewer salient poems here than in the last book; there are echoes of other strains; yet there is, throughout, expression that, after the old fashion, startles and waylays. "Several of these poems," says Laurence Housman, "as

A. E. HOUSMAN
Drawing by Francis Dodd.

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were some of 'Last Poems,' also, are of 'Shropshire Lad' date, and . . . a good many . . . belong to the 'Terence' series." "Poems of Terence Hearsay" was a first, discarded, title; that person being, as the poet himself has written, "an imaginary character, with something of my temper and view of life," and he added of "Last Poems," "Very little in the book is biographical."

For those unfamiliar with the genius of A. E. Housman—can there be such?—I suppose the old things should be said about the stoic philosophy of one to whom "high heaven and earth [ailed] from their prime foundation," of the mithridate he purposed to furnish to "ill-treated fellows," as he says here, "For them to read when they're in trouble And I am not," and of the almost incredible skill of his chiefly pessimistic verse. But to believe him a poet of one tune is very false. Any close examination of his cadences will reveal much variety.

Housman was, of course, most learned in minor Greek and Latin texts and, in his own field of scholarship at Cambridge, was a meticulous critic animated by "a gentle ferocity." He edited Manilius and Juvenal. He recognized the pedant in himself and enjoyed it, but poetry sang in his bloodstream and insured the fame he both desired and feared.

His chief influences he listed as Shakespeare's songs, the Scottish Border Ballads, and Heine. These influences are, in fact, easily seen (he can even in this book pick up Father Prout's metre in "The Bells of Shandon" and write in it a typical Housman poem) but the distillation of the influence and the subtle variation of form conveyed his own magic. No poet has ever stamped his own personality more indelibly on his verse.

I had intended to quote from this book. I shall not, because it should be bought and read. Like the beacons he often saw actually burning, these poems "sign with conflagration The empty moors of air," and will for long remain those of a brave man and a good comrade.

Silver Hind

By FRANCES FROST

COME, winter, my silver hind,
my crystal-treading beast;
flee the white fields of sky
and arrow again to my breast.

Come, winter, my cool-flanked one,
bend your head to my halter:
my heart is no hidden sun,
my stretched hand will not falter.

Bend down your smooth bright throat:
I have woven a harness of thought
from the autumn boughs of my mind.
Come, my shy one, be caught,

let your clear beauty be tethered
where late hot summer stood,
and let us go softly together
into the pathless wood.

Is Lawrence Neglected?

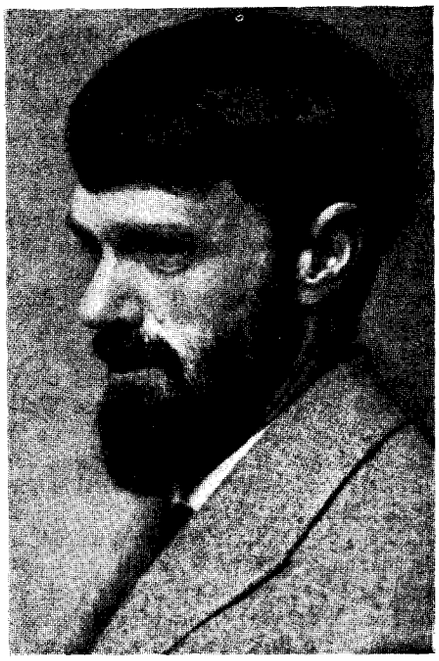
PHOENIX: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence. Edited and with an Introduction by Edward D. MacDonald. New York: The Viking Press. 1936. $3.75.

Reviewed by THEODORE SPENCER

THE publication of this rich if uneven volume of Lawrence's ungathered or unpublished papers—sketches, book reviews, essays on sex, painting, education, psychology — once more brings up the question of Lawrence's place in recent literature. He has, in the six years since his death, in spite of all the books about him—perhaps because of them—been neglected. Almost nothing in the technique of his novels has been fruitful to practising novelists (to some, like Thomas Wolfe, it has done definite harm), and his particular kind of philosophy has been ignored by the central trends of our decade.

Lawrence hated people to say that he wasn't an artist; he took offence when Edwin Muir observed that he had not submitted himself to any discipline. But Muir was right; artistic discipline, no matter what Lawrence may say about it, did not really absorb him. It was what he saw, what he felt, that mattered. And what Lawrence saw and felt was of extraordinary interest. I doubt if there has ever been a writer who has been so remarkably aware of the immediate present, the pulse and glow of the life-giving present, as he; nor has there often been a writer who could convey that awareness so well. "Give me!" he cries in the preface to "New Poems," "give me nothing fixed, set, static. . . . Give me the still white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now." Put in that form, of course, it sounds rather like rant; Lawrence is not always at his best when he tries to justify or explain his intuitions. Where he is at his best is in the actual descriptions, descriptions of a rabbit or a bird or a fox terrier (the little story in this volume of a fox terrier named "Rex" is Lawrence at his finest). The same is true of Lawrence's descriptions of places—Sardinia or Australia or New Mexico. On this level, the descriptive level, Lawrence is a great writer.

Lawrence's success in describing the life of external things was the result of a force of awareness, a genius of awareness, in himself. But it had its limitations. The very intensity of his intuition, its demonic quality, kept him, when he went deeper than rabbits or places and tried to describe human beings, from seeing them except as examples of his own emotional problems. His characters lack the



D. H. LAWRENCE

salt of objectivity. Further, in describing men and women he tried to go too far down into the dark sources of consciousness. Seeking for the fundamental springs of personality, he got *below* personality. He went under the Plimsoll line of identity. His novels are full of subtle human conflicts, but they are never conflicts which particularize his characters as human beings; they are examples of passions, of states of feeling, mostly in the abstract. His people, with one or two exceptions, are merely wells or rather geysers of instinct, acting from impulses so obscure that they dim, they don't illuminate, individuality. As a novelist, Lawrence's profound sensibility tended to defeat its own ends.

Yet this emphasis on the inner reality, the reality below consciousness and below will, was also one of the strengths of Lawrence, even if it sometimes got in his way. For Lawrence was right; there *is* a dark core of being, "there *is* a flame or a Life Everlasting wreathing through the cosmos for ever and giving us our renewal, once we can get in touch with it." Knowing that may not be of use in constructing novels, which are as much concerned with the social man as they are with the essence of man's being, but such knowledge gives the knower a sense of reality, and anyone who has it is worth listening to. And for this reason Lawrence, with all his wordiness, his *longueurs*, his digressions, is worth listening to. Even when he is off the track, as in the long essay on Hardy in the present volume, he is worth listening to. That is why it is a reproach to our decade that we can say it has left Lawrence to one side.

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Witchcraft in Mississippi

(*Continued from page 4*)

easy a verdict, it would have to be extended to all the population of Jefferson, the countryside, New Granada, and New Orleans, and besides the whole force of Mr. Faulkner's titanic effort is expended in assuring us that this is not insanity.

A scholarly examination might get us a little farther. This fiction of families destroyed by a mysterious curse (beginning with the Sartorises, there has been one in every novel except "As I Lay Dying" and "Pylon"), of ruined castles in romantic landscapes, of Giaours and dark "unwill," may be only a continuation of the literature of excessive heartbreak. The Poe of "Ligeia" and kindred tales, Charles Brockden Brown, Horace Walpole, and Mrs. Radcliffe suggest a clue to a state of mind which, after accepting the theorem that sensation is desirable for itself alone, has moved on to the further theorem that the more violent sensation is the more admirable, noble, and appropriate to fiction. Surely this reek of hell and the passage to and fro of demons has intimate linkages with Eblis; surely Vathek saw this ceaseless agony, this intercellular doom, and this Caliph's heart transparent as crystal and enveloped in flames that can never be quenched. Surely; and yet that tells us very little.

Much more central is the thesis advanced in these columns a couple of years ago, that Mr. Faulkner is exploring the primitive violence of the unconscious mind. Nothing else can explain the continuity of rape, mutilation, castration, incest, patricide, lynching, and necrophilia in his novels, the blind drive of terror, the obsessional preoccupation with corpses and decay and generation and especially with the threat to generation. It is for the most part a deliberate exploration, Mr. Faulkner is at pains to give us Freudian clues, and he has mapped in detail the unconscious mind's domain of horrors, populated by anthropophagi, hermaphrodites, Hyppogypi, acephalites, and cynocephalites. It is the world of subliminal guilt and revenge, the land of prodigy which D. H. Lawrence thought was peopled exclusively by beautiful, testicular athletes, but which is inhabited instead by such races as Mandeville and Carpini saw. These are the dog-faced men, the men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, who feed on corpses, who hiss and bark instead of talking, whose custom it is to tear their own bowels. A far country, deep under the mind's frozen ocean. In Mr. Faulkner's words, a "shadowy miasmic region," "amoral evil's undeviating absolute," "quicksand of nightmare," "the seething and anonymous miasmal mass which in all the years of time has taught itself no boon of death."

Haunted by the fear of impotence and mutilation and dismemberment, hell-ridden by compulsions to destroy the mind's own self and to perpetrate a primal, revengeful murder on the old, cataleptic in the helplessness of the terrified young, bringing the world to an end in a final fantasy of ritual murder and the burning house—the inhabitants of the prodigy-land of the unconscious are also fascinated by those other primal lusts and dreads, incest and miscengenation. In Joe Christmas and Etienne Bon, neither white nor black, repudiating both races, inexplicably ecstatic with love of both, mysteriously dreading both, mysteriously wreaking revenge and expiation on both, we face a central preoccupation of Mr. Faulkner, a central theme of his fiction, and, I think, an obligation to go beyond the psycho-analytical study of his purposes. In spite of his enormous labor to elucidate these two mulattoes and their feelings and their symbolism in society, they are never elucidated. What is it that bubbles through those minds, what is it that drives them, what are they feeling, what are they trying to do, what do they mean? You cannot tell, for you do not know. A fair conclusion is that you do not know because Mr. Faulkner does not know. I suggest that on that fact hinges the explanation of his fiction.

It is a fact in religion. For the energy derived from primitive sources in the mind projects a structure of thought intended to be explanatory of the world, and this is religious, though religious in the familiar reversal that constitutes demonology and witchcraft. William James has told us how it comes about. The simple truth is that Mr. Faulkner is a mystic. He is trying to communicate to us an immediate experience of the ineffable. He cannot tell us because he does not know —because what he perceives cannot be known, cannot therefore be told, can never be put into words but can only be suggested in symbols, whose content and import must forever be in great part missed and in greater part misunderstood. This is a mysticism, furthermore, of what James called the lower path. There are, James said, two mystical paths, the one proceeding out of some beatitude of spiritual health which we may faintly glimpse in the visions of the saints. It is from the lower path, the decay of the vision, that witchcraft always proceeds. And witchcraft, like all magic, is a spurious substitute for fundamental knowledge.

The crux of the process by which witchcraft came to substitute for the ordinary concerns of fiction in Mr. Faulkner's work may be observed in "Sartoris." His first book, "Soldiers' Pay," introduced the overwhelming despair finding expression in lachrymation and the creatures of unadulterated evil that have appeared in all his later books—curiously combined with the glibness and tight technique of magazine fiction. His second book, "Mosquitoes," was his "Crome Yellow" effort, and had in common with his other work only a pair of lovers moving on some manic errand through a nightmare world. With "Sartoris" (which was published, if not written, before "The Sound and the Fury"), he became a serious novelist in the best sense of that adjective. He undertook to deal fairly with experience, to articulate his characters with a social organism, and to interpret the web of life in terms of human personality. Wherever he was factual and objective—in Loosh, Miss Jenny (who is his best creation to date), the unmystical Negroes, the crackers, the old men, Dr. Alford—he imposed a conformable and convincing world of his own on a recognizable American experience, in symbols communicative to us all. But he failed in the principal effort of the novel. What he tried to do, with the Sartorises themselves, was to deliver up to us the heart of a mystery—to explain the damnation, the curse, of a brilliant, decayed, and vainglorious family doomed to failure and death. And he did not do it. They were a void. We did not know them and he could not tell us about them. They were without necessity, without causation. When he faced the simple but primary necessity of the novelist, to inform us about his characters, he backed away.

He has been backing away ever since. All the prestidigitation of his later technique rests on a tacit promise that this tortuous narrative method, this obsession with pathology, this parade of Grand Guignol tricks and sensations, will, if persevered with, bring us in the end to a deeper and a fuller truth about his people than we could get otherwise. And it never does. Those people remain wraiths blown at random through fog by winds of myth. The revelation remains just a series of horror stories that are essentially false—false because they happen to grotesques who have no psychology, no necessary motivation as what they have become out of what they were. They are also the targets of a fiercely rhetorical bombast diffused through the brilliant technique that promises us everything and gives us nothing, leaving them just wraiths. Meanwhile the talent for serious fiction shown in "Sartoris" and the rich comic intelligence grudgingly displayed from time to time, especially in "Sanctuary," have been allowed to atrophy from disuse and have been covered deep by a tide of sensibility.

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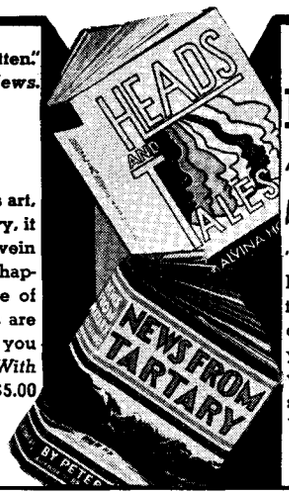

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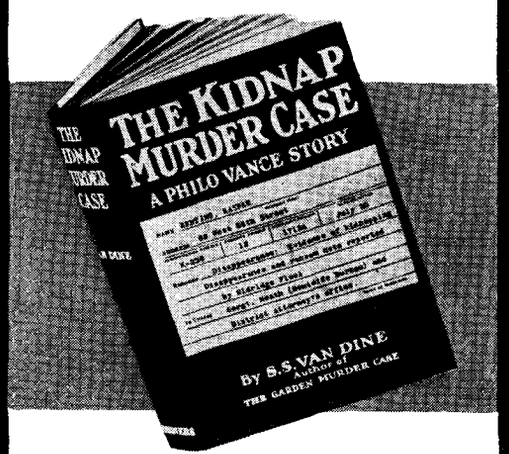

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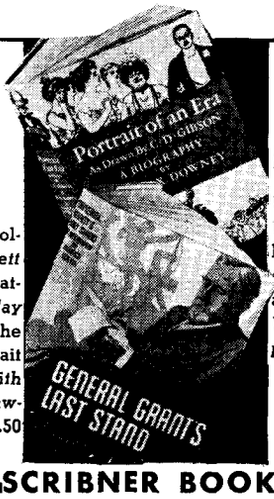

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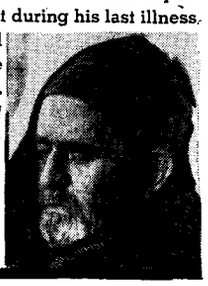

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How Not to Make Converts

HOW TO RUN A WAR. By Bruce Winton Knight. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1936. $2.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

PROPAGANDA usually serves rather to keep up the spirits of the faithful than to convert the indifferent or the hostile. Mr. Knight's tract is probably adequate propaganda in this sense; his fellow-pacifists may find it nerves them to more intense pacifism. It is, however, quite useless for the purposes of persuasion for which one is bound to assume Mr. Knight in part intended it. Those who do not already agree with him will be infuriated, annoyed, amused, or perhaps a little saddened, if they wish for peace on earth. (Pacifists are not, of course, the only people who wish for peace on earth.) Mr. Knight may really believe that the best way to move a man to do what you want him to do is to start by getting him thoroughly angry with you. In writing this book, at any rate, he seems to have acted on some such belief.

His ironical title prefaces over two hundred pages of sustained irony—a fact in itself sufficient to explain the failure of the book as an instrument of persuasion. The American "upper class" is told how to start a war, how to lie to people to get them to fight, how to kill people—a gruesome bit,—how to get the killing tools, how to make the enemy pay, how to make the poor pay. In substance, all this is a history of the Four Years' War and its consequences veiled, and almost concealed, in some very heavy irony. The best irony is effective only in small quantities; Mr. Knight gives us an overdose.

Mr. Knight, like so many of our disappointed liberals, probably finds a real consolation in the wistful superiority his use of irony affords him. But he probably also likes to think of himself as not without influence in this world, of his book as furthering the cause among the unbelievers. There are few signs that he has tried to understand the ways of the unbelievers. His abuse of irony is not his sole tactical mistake.

"As late as A. D. 1931," he writes, "in a speech at an American Legion banquet in Baltimore, America's Reverend Andrew Caraker declared that: 'had Jesus lived He would have been the first to volunteer in the American Army, the first to wear a gas-mask, the first to shoulder a rifle.' Obviously Jesus could have made better time by joining the British army, but perhaps the idea is that He would have waited two or three years on account of His Americanism." As to the accuracy with which the Reverend Mr. Caraker is reported, Mr. Knight gives no proof, but we need not here be finicky about such matters. The point is clear—and Mr. Knight unconsciously reinforces it with instances on almost every page — that there are in this world certain people for whom words like the Reverend Mr. Caraker's are moving and beautiful, just as there are certain people for whom the music of Carrie Jacobs Bond and the poetry of Edgar Guest are moving and beautiful. You cannot deal with such questions as war and peace without considering the ideas and emotions of such people.

Surely no one believes you can supplant a love for Mrs. Bond with a love for Mozart by telling the lovers of Mrs. Bond that they ought not to love her, that their affection is ludicrous, that they ought to turn to higher things? Few believe that you can effect such a supplanting by forbidding Mrs. Bond's music, and requiring Mozart's. It is certainly possible to "improve" the musical taste of individuals, at any rate, but only by a long process involving the skilful handling of much besides abstract principles and high ideals. It is probably possible to influence the political behavior of individuals, and even of groups, but only by the skilful use of ideas and emotions already familiar, already loved. Briefly: the more evidence Mr. Knight piles up to prove that in their attitude towards war many people exhibit extraordinary stupidity (the word is perhaps unfortunate, as betraying a judgment of value, but it seems a favorite among liberals), the less likely it appears that books like his can suddenly teach such people wisdom. If you really believe, as most American liberals seem to believe, that men are fools, the only sensible thing to do is to try to fool them.

This Mr. Knight and his fellow pacifists all refuse to do; or if they try, they fail very badly. That ironic remark about the Americanism of Jesus is delightful for those few who feel that they have risen above both America and Jesus; for the many in whom one or both of these symbolic abstractions arouses feelings as deep and as permanent as any sound libido, it is not delightful at all. "In general," writes Mr. Knight, "you should seem to prove what people already want to believe, and to justify what they already want to do." Irony again; but irony, as even the grammars tell us, frequently backfires.

Finally, one may very well question the effectiveness of another favorite pacifist device, the horror story, which Mr. Knight uses to the full in his fourth chapter, "How to Kill People." Mere statistics and isolated incidents fail to move most men to horror. The job has to be done by an artist. Barbusse succeeded in "Le Feu," and so have a few other novelists. But Mr. Knight's chaplet of atrocities is no more moving than it would be had it appeared in the *Congressional Record.* And it does so much resemble the pack of lies he had just uncovered in his previous chapter on the evils of war-time propaganda! There is also the possibility that a good many men find tales of horror less dull than much else in this world. Few in our Western world, however, fail to share something of Mr. Knight's hatred for war. Most of us feel—though we might not care to phrase it thus—that war today is a pathological state of society. That is why Mr. Knight's awkward mistakes in his treatment of the patient seem so serious. If only the pacifists were better peacemakers!

Crane Brinton, associate professor of history at Harvard, is the author of "The Lives of Talleyrand."

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Art of the Night

BY GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

R. C. SHERRIFF'S and Jeanne De Casalis's "St. Helena," produced in the Lyceum theatre and published in America by Stokes, has been hospitably received by the English critics of literature, along with certain English novelists, G. B. Stern among them, as a rather dandy example of the literary drama. Although it is against my notoriously sensitive critical nature to appear presumptuous, I must venture the personal opinion that if "St. Helena" is literary drama in any true sense, give me "Boy Meets Girl." The critical snobbery which preconceives as literary drama any play dealing with an eminent corpse, written in the chronicle form and liberally sprinkled with the eminent corpse's quondam epigrams and philsophical animadversions, duly interrupted on at least two occasions with hints of the late puissant hero's tenderness and humanity, customarily indicated by his interest in garden flowers and the neighbors' children—such critical snobbery might naturally be expected to discern in this treatise on Napoleon's last days not only literary but dramatic virtues which, to more realistic perceptions, are nowhere in it. The published script has that veneer of theatrical reticence which is habitually mistaken by the professional book reviewer for dramatic austerity and which in stage production is so often synonymous with polite monotony; it reads well enough, perhaps, for the book reviewer who believes that the art of drama should be confined to the library; and it moves fairly smoothly with the turn of its leaves. But even a perfected turn-stage, which its production at the Lyceum enjoyed, could not make it move in the actual theatre.

If the Sheriff-De Casalis exhibit were to be played in the theatre in its original, uncut, and published incarnation, I doubt if even the literary critics who have visited their esteem upon it could beatifically sit through it. Going so far as to grant their contention that it comprises a praiseworthy specimen of the literary drama, they would yet, I daresay, were they to behold the very excisions the theatre has made in the text, be reluctantly forced to grunt that the stage has made a relatively better piece of literature out of it than the one they had previously proclaimed. Endless literal quotations of Napoleon's opinions on everything from the human soul to the English nation and from Divine Providence to the beneficial effect of oranges upon the blood stream, a parroting of all-too-familiar items in the Napoleon biography, and litmus paper held steadily for more than two hours before the stale breath of historical record are hardly the tonics for true literary achievement, whether in book or play form. And by ruthlessly chopping out of the authors' work as much of them as possible the stage producers proved themselves sounder critics of literature, and infinitely more constructive ones, than the gentlemen whose paid profession literary criticism is.

Lest I seem to be taking literary critics for an unnecessarily rude ride, a word about their brothers, the drama critics. If certain literary critics have professed to detect considerable literary quality in "St. Helena," certain drama critics, though surely not so many, have equally professed to detect in it considerable dramatic quality. The feat is thus, if not exactly, 50-50 at least 75-25. There is, unless I am more than usually in error, not much more drama, as I have intimated, in the play than there is literature. Drama criticism, alas, can often be as perverse and hanswurstish as literary criticism. I offer, in example, a touching morsel. It is culled from a lush review of the play by Mr. John Anderson. After a lengthy and exuberant tribute to Maurice Evans, the actor who played the Napoleonic role, thus, punditically if regretfully, Mr. Anderson: "But plays about Napoleon have found it impossible to rise above the chief player's performance." Which, you will allow, is pretty tough on Bernard Shaw and "A Man of Destiny" and even on old Sardou and "Madame Sans-Gêne," to toss off just a couple of recollections.

Erratum

"Adventures with Hardy Bulbs," by Louise Beebe Wilder, listed as a Harper publication in our issue of October 24, is published by the Macmillan Company.

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You will find a complete review of TARE HARVEST in *The Saturday Review* for September 19. It may give you some ideas for your letter. Another angle of interest is suggested by the *N. Y. Times Book Review* which said, "She brings to life a panorama of the hardships, banditry, home life and ranching problems in South America as vivid as the North American scene in *Lamb in His Bosom.*"

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A BALANCED RATION FOR A WEEK'S READING

NIGHT OVER FITCH'S POND. By Cora Jarrett. *Houghton Mifflin.*

I COVER THE WATERFRONT. By Max Miller. *Dutton.*

THE REVOLT OF THE MASSES. By Jose Ortega y Gasset. *Norton.*

American Historical Novels

IN response to a request forwarded by *F. L. S. of Chicago, Ill.*, I was in the full swing of presenting "a list of readings (novels) that deal with different periods of American history" when the last instalment of the Clearing House was cut short by my inability to stretch a column beyond its allotted length. I was about to launch forth on fiction using the Revolution as background when I was cut off, and was ready to remark that so far as the literature on that period was concerned one name leads all the rest —William Makepeace Thackeray's—with THE VIRGINIANS, surely a great novel about a great theme, with Washington, Johnson, Richardson, and other notabilities on both sides of the sea appearing in its pages, with its two heroes aligned on different sides in the war, and the background of George III's era both in England and America woven into a tapestry glowing with color. Like Thackeray's HENRY ESMOND, of which THE VIRGINIANS, as everybody knows, is the sequel, Winston Churchill's RICHARD CARVEL (Macmillan) is a novel in the first person couched in the language of the period, and like THE VIRGINIANS it presents the great of England and America. This was a best-seller in its day and has been deservedly popular ever since. In it appears Paul Jones who figures also in two other excellent tales of the Revolutionary period, Cooper's THE PILOT (one of the best of his sea tales) and James Boyd's DRUMS (Scribners). Of the years just before the outbreak of the war a lively impression is to be had from Stephen Vincent Benét's SPANISH BAYONET (Farrar & Rinehart) which depicts the Florida of the era immediately precedent to the struggle. Amelia E. Barr's once immensely popular A BOW OF ORANGE RIBBON (Dodd, Mead) portrays the worthy Dutch burghers of pre-Revolutionary New York and the soldiery of King George.

And now the Revolution itself. There's Cooper again with THE SPY which plays in Westchester County, introduces Washington in disguise, and is a rousing good tale though it has slight regard for history. There's S. Weir Mitchell's HUGH WYNNE—FREE QUAKER (Century), with its carefully drawn background of Quaker society and its representations of Washington, Lafayette, Franklin, and other heroes of the time. There's Kenneth Roberts's ARUNDEL (Doubleday, Doran) in which Aaron Burr appears as he does in Emerson Hough's THE MAGNIFICENT ADVENTURE (Appleton-Century), and there are Walter Edmonds's excellent DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK (Little, Brown), which gives a vivid, realistic picture not only of the fierce struggle which raged to a draw in the Battle of Oriskany but of the life and temper of that section of New York state during and immediately after the Revolution, and Harold Frederic's long popular IN THE VALLEY (Scribners) which begins some years earlier than the period on which Mr. Edmonds's story lifts the curtain but on the other hand concludes after the Battle of Saratoga.

Lest I allow another inexorable limitation of space to overtake me before I reach or dispose of the Civil War I hasten on after this deplorably sketchy list of references to the Revolution with no more than a passing reference to two books which play against the background of the War of 1812—Oliver La Farge's LONG PENNANT (Houghton Mifflin) and Kenneth Roberts's LOVELY LADY (Doubleday, Doran). The classic novel of the Civil War is, of course, Stephen Crane's THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE (Appleton-Century) the action of which covers hardly more than the Battle of Chancellorsville but which is a brilliant and unforgettable portrayal of the psychological reactions of a youth exposed to the horrors of war. Ambrose Bierce's IN THE MIDST OF LIFE wears the stamp of quality in its publication in the Modern Library series, and James Boyd's MARCHING ON (Scribners), a tale of North Carolina before and during the Civil War, has won a deserved reputation for its portrayal not only of battle but of the impact of battle on the individual. The list of Civil War novels is so long and space, as I said before, so short that perforce I hurry through the number with hardly a comment on such books as Winston Churchill's THE CRISIS (Macmillan), a best-seller in its day; Ellen Glasgow's THE BATTLE-GROUND (Doubleday, Doran), a tale of Virginia; Mary Johnston's THE LONG ROLL (Houghton Mifflin), a story of the Valley campaign in which Stonewall Jackson figures as hero; T. S. Stribling's THE FORGE (Doubleday, Doran); MacKinlay Kantor's LONG REMEMBER (Coward-McCann), a grim and powerful novelette focussed about the Battle of Gettysburg—Mr. Kantor has another and also effective Civil War story about to appear, AROUSE AND BEWARE (Coward-McCann); Evelyn Scott's THE WAVE (Random House), and Leonard Ehrlich's GOD'S ANGRY MAN (Simon & Schuster) which last presents a full-length portrait of John Brown. And then, first, and last, all the time, of course, there is Margaret Mitchell's GONE WITH THE WIND (Macmillan). But why speak of it? Over six hundred thousand copies sold since its publication in July have made its name and its interest known throughout the land.

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The Compleat Collector

RARE BOOKS: CONDUCTED BY JOHN T. WINTERICH

In alternate weeks this Department is devoted to Fine Printing and is conducted by Carl Purington Rollins

Forthcoming Sales

ON Wednesday, November 4th, when the hurly-burly's done and the last congratulatory telegram has been grudgingly dispatched and magnanimously acknowledged, the American Art Association Anderson Galleries, despite its sesquipedalian designation, will get down to the serious business of selling books. The first offering of the new auction season will be the library of the late William B. Gourley of Patterson, N. J. Mr. Gourley was born in County Down and organized the Paterson branch of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, but the bright particular star of his library (a well-rounded, intelligent, honest collection) was a backslid Calvinist named Robert Burns. Here is a Kilmarnock, with many marginal repairs and restorations, but a Kilmarnock for a' that; here are the first London, the first Edinburgh, "The Scots Musical Museum" complete. The 780 lots in the catalogue embrace a wide variety of desirable and, in several instances, definitely scarce material. William Gourley Boyle contributes a biographical note that thoroughly justifies its inclusion. The Gourley collection will be on public view from October 30th.

On the evenings of October 29th and 30th the Rains Galleries will disperse the library of the late William N. Johnson of Manchester, N. H., plus selections from the library of Hamilton Vaughan Bail of Jersey City and other consignments. The collection is particularly rich in the New Englanders, with 90 Oliver Wendell Holmes lots—the most inclusive Holmes auction representation since the Wakeman sale of 1924. A Edward Newton, with 29 lots, leads the field among the non-New Englanders.

Piscator Perennis

A NEW CHRONICLE OF THE COMPLEAT ANGLER. By Peter Oliver. New York: The Paisley Press, Inc. 1936. $6.50.

"The Compleat Angler" is as permanent as Christmas. Between 1653 and 1936 (the first date included and the second preëmpted) there have been 284 editions of each. Eventually the "Angler" bids fair to come out ahead. It got off to a slow start—six editions from 1653 to 1676, then no more until 1750 for a total of ten during the eighteenth century. Since 1875 there has been no stopping it. Every year since then save two —1917 and 1933—there has been at least one "Angler." It has been depression-proof—four editions in 1929, three in 1930, five in 1931, one in 1932, three in 1934, one in 1935.

One may be permitted the hope that Mr. Oliver has nodded, and that some shelf-grubber will turn up a 1917 and a 1933 and repair the lacunæ. But Mr. Oliver, regrettably, is probably right. His is a workmanlike and serviceable compendium. He has built more than a sound and readable bibliography—he has compounded the biography of a book. If some of his notes are too sketchily ample (there is no necessity, in his discussion of the James Russell Lowell edition of 1889, for a page account of just who Lowell was), he at least errs on the right side. He has, in fact, done a mediocre job with information easy to get, and an excellent one with information hard to get.

This "New Chronicle" represents a new departure in bibliography. Bibliographies get out of date faster than telephone directories. The present manual is particularly vulnerable in that if a new "Angler" is issued tomorrow, the "New Chronicle" will immediately fall a year behind the times.

What to do? The newly-organized Bibliographic Institute, Inc., plans to make Mr. Oliver's compilation the basis of an interesting experiment. For thirty-five cents it will supply purchasers of the "New Chronicle" over a five-year period with such additional "Angler" information as may be forthcoming, in the form of a page or pages to be tipped in the book to replace perforated blank pages. The Compleat Collector, inevitably sympathetic to any activity that concerns "The Compleat Angler," hereby contracts to watch the progress of this endeavor and will report thereupon, D. V., at the proper moment.

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"I found this book much more to my liking than 'Studs Lonigan.' . . . The extraordinary thing about Mr. Farrell's writing is its complete honesty."
HARRY HANSEN in The World Telegram

"Hard, veracious, gripping . . . superb characterizations . . . honest, humorous, uncompromising."
RALPH THOMPSON in The New York Times

"The best reporter on American life since Dreiser and Lewis, and a stronger artist than either."
News-Week

"The brilliant young writer whose 'Studs Lonigan' is now almost a classic more than comes up to expectations in this new novel."
Scribner's Magazine

" 'A World I Never Made' may be the 'Main Street' of the 1930's."
Literary Digest

"None of the novels [of the Studs Lonigan trilogy] save 'Judgment Day' matches it in effectiveness, and it is certainly far superior (a necessary comparison) to 'Young Lonigan'."
ALFRED KAZIN in Books (Sunday New York Herald-Tribune)

"The embarrassed reader has no doubt that Mr. Farrell heard such language in the Chicago tenements, but wishes that he hadn't."
—LEWIS GANNETT in the New York Herald-Tribune.

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BY

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Author of STUDS LONIGAN

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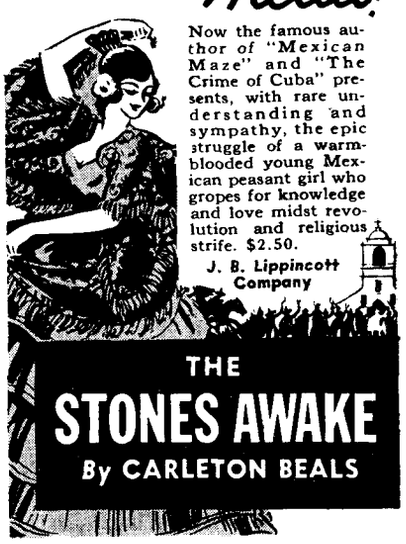

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The New Books

Art

U. S. CAMERA, 1936. Edited by T. J. Maloney. Morrow. 1936. $2.90.

The second volume of this work is a valuable and absorbing book, fully as good as any of the European annuals and an excellent summary of American photography. It once more demonstrates that American photographers can do anything that any other photographers can do. It also demonstrates that they tend to do just that. The nearest one can come to a generalization, on this showing, is to say that the Americans seem to be about where the Germans were seven or eight years ago. In so far as there is anything specifically American in these pictures, it comes when they are being *"Sachlich"* (the favorite patter cliché of the moment, arty for "objective") and rendering a specifically American environment.

In an excellent preface, Mr. M. F. Agha labors to dissipate the vertiginous esthetic moonshine in which photographers, like fifth-rate violinists and tenth-rate poets, love to wrap themselves. Unhappily, his editor's selections do not always live up to him. Something over half of the photographs reproduced are unimpeachable, many of them are superb, and more than a few are memorable. These are the camera doing what no other medium can do so well or what only the camera can do at all—microphotography, air photography, "candid" photography, speed and sport photography, the photography of surfaces and textures, and straight portrait work. Also unexceptionable is the photography that can be described as journalistic—reportorial in the sense of straightforward representation, the *Sachlichkeit* of the jargon, or editorial in the sense of selection and interpretation. But a number of specimens herein which show photography trying to be literature are bad, and others which show it trying to be painting are, as they have always been, altogether horrible. Worse still is the pretentious photography which calls itself abstract and that which endeavors to be, in the language of another annual, *"vision du monde."* It shows an honest craft acquiring megalomania, and that it has the support of highly advertised names in no way diminishes the preposterousness of its delusions. Mr. Agha ought to loose himself on such absurdities in the service of the national horse sense.

B. DV.

Fiction

THE BEST BRITISH SHORT STORIES. Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Houghton Mifflin. 1936. $2.50.

By this time Mr. O'Brien's yearly anthologies of short stories are well-known. Here he has selected "from the stories published in British, Irish, Colonial, and American periodicals those stories by British, Irish, and Colonial authors which have rendered life imaginatively in organic substance and artistic form." He has chosen principally from *New Stories*, the *London Mercury*, and *The Listener*. Among the more striking of the inclusions are stories by H. E. Bates, James Hanley, Michael McLaverty, Elizabeth Bowen, and Arthur Calder-Marshall. The real story told to Eric Walter White by the Fremdenzimmergesell is a striking one. There are several fantasies. The average

(*Continued on page 22*)

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE BELL IN THE FOG *John Stephen Strange* (Crime Club: $2.)	B. Gantt, convalescing pix expert, solves mystery of corpse on Maine island beach and two other related murders.	Only atmosphere is murky. The rest, from wits of Mr. Gantt to tongues of islanders, is needle-sharp.	Superlative
DEATH OVER SAN SILVESTRO *Mike Teagle* (Hillman-Curl: $2.)	Wicked newspaper tycoon, his candidate for President, and luckless D. A. R. among casualties before body-guard Teagle gets the slayer.	Grim, hard-boiled stuff, with timely political trimmings, some very rough langwidge, and a windup that freezes the corpuscles.	Tough 'n Terrible
FERRYMAN, TAKE HIM ACROSS! *Virginia Rath* (Crime Club: $2.)	Philandering schoolteacher and pretty gal with slightly shady past slain in Cal. mountain town. Rocky Allan officiates competently.	A tangled skein of scholastic intrigue, with feline ladies, sour-pussed gents, much swift action, and not-unexpected solution.	Good enough
THE KIDNAP MURDER CASE *S. S. Van Dine* (Scribners: $2.)	Philo Vance diagnoses murder through planted kidnap clues in N. Y. C. mansion, leads D. A. Markham and Insp. Heath to killer.	Minor irritations as usual in latter-day Vance, but it's a neat mystery aside from one camouflaged coincidence.	If you like Vance

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

DISCONCERTING candor in a recent ad of Bloomingdale's book department. "Old English books, $1 each," they said. "Famous classical literature, handsome antique bindings. The type that decorators snatch up." ☞Frank Howard, president of the Booksellers' League of N. Y., tells us that the monthly dinner will be held November 18 at the Aldine Club. The list of speakers is headed by Governor Gifford Pinchot, and the guest of honor will be Frank C. Henry of Lippincott. Tickets can be had from Theodore Schulte, 80 Fourth Avenue. ☞The famous Johnson-Boswell collection of Mr. R. B. Adam of Buffalo has been lent to the Rush Rhees Library of the University of Rochester, where it will be available for the consultation of scholars. A private showing of outstanding items in this extraordinary collection is to be held at the Rhees Library on November 1st, with brief talks by Mr. Adam and Mr. Edward G. Miner. ☞Speaking of libraries, it seems that poor old Q. made a horrid error when he said (Oct. 17) that the Amherst College Library was publishing a Bibliography of Robert Frost. It's not the Amherst College Library but the Jones Library of Amherst, which is an independent institution altogether, and Mr. Charles R. Green, the Jones librarian, is grieved by our error. So are we, and apologize. The Frost Bibliography is number 3 of the Jones Library's publications. ☞Old erroneous Q. hears with interest of the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, edited by William Butler Yeats; rumor reports that very few of the American modernists are included. ☞However, as long as Walt Whitman got in maybe the others don't matter? ☞Speaking of that, a mighty good poem to read again on Election Day (no matter which way you vote) is Matthew Arnold's *Obermann Once More*. Some of Arnold's stanzas are oddly appropriate to the present:—

Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
Your social order too!
Where tarries he, the Power who said:
See. I make all things new?

And (referring to a recent political visit to Harvard)

The East bowed low before the blast
In patient deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past
And plunged in thought again.

☞Edgar H. Wells and Company, 602 Madison Ave., N. Y., issue an interesting catalogue of *Translations from the Greek and Latin Classics* and proudly remark the introductory note contributed by Professor J. L. Lowes. ☞Will Solle's little mail-order bookshop in a cherry orchard at Omena, Michigan, sends out a bulletin of lively cheer. Will says he only gets one customer a day in the shop but his 4 x 4 office is bursting with mail. Omena is somewhere up North of Traverse City, with one train a day, called *Maude;* but Will stoutly maintains he can find out-of-print books as fast as anyone in the big towns. He had to retire to Omena on account of bad health but says he's so busy now getting out bulletins he hasn't time to feel poorly. ☞Speaking of geography (Old Q.'s hobby) a client reports his amusement in motoring past a little place in North Carolina called Myrtle Beach—somewhere on Pamlico Sound, perhaps?—which placards itself as "Chicago's Nearest Beach." It would be a nice measurement to determine which salt water is nearest Old Loopy, but our guess is that Atlantic City is still a little closer?

☞The autumn list of the Yale University Press much pleases Old Q. because it supplies what we have long hankered, some really artistic and well-printed postcards. Mr. Samuel Chamberlain, distinguished etcher and photographer, has made series of fine photographic views of historic and architectural charms of New England, and of New York City. These cost, when bought by the set, only about 3 cents each, and are a delight to the eye. ☞The artistic and mercantile possibilities of the picture postcards have long been overlooked in this country.

The Mind and Art of

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By Max Beerbohm

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A. EDWARD NEWTON

Bibliography and *pseudo*-Bibliography

(Rosenbach Lectures, 1936)

The book collecting "game" with some of the absurdities of bibliomania, the fun to be had with book catalogues, and a discussion of essayists, particularly Montaigne and Lamb—in Dr. Newton's inimitable style.

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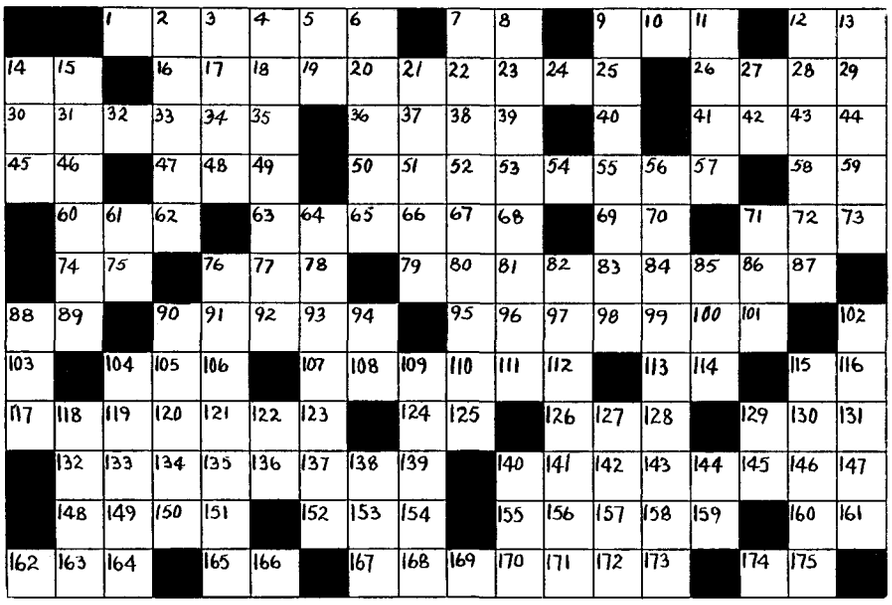
Double-Crostics: No. 136

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY



DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-seven words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Unless otherwise indicated, the author is English or American.

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 14 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

I. Tending to upset or ruin.

II. Highest attainable (comp.)

III. Farthest extent.

IV. Flattered in a servile way.

V. Ebbing.

VI. Sam Weller's father.

VII. Stingy, niggardly fellow (2 words).

VIII. Bunk (slang).

IX. On a level.

X. Limits.

XI. Wife of Geraint ("Idylls of the King").

XII. Opera by Verdi.

XIII. Novel by Dostoievsky.

XIV. Having a changeable luster or color.

XV. German poet (1797-1856).

XVI. American novelist (1885—).

XVII. Goddess of yearly crops (Roman).

XVIII. A paragon.

XIX. Explicit.

XX. Set in opposition.

XXI. Character in "Twelfth Night."

XXII. Not concealed.

XXIII. A blackguard (slang).

XXIV. Delineated.

XXV. Hebrew prophet, 8th Century B. C.

XXVI. Knickknacks (colloq.).

XXVII. A Hebrew tribe.

WORDS

125 61 133 140 46 154 106 129 155 122

74 8 41 84 27 130 16 161

134 29 150 168 118 96 91 70 87

40 128 72 164 143 76 49 136

98 111 89 5 124 42 86 175

82 152 68 147

100 48 127 162 44 114 14 137 11 78

94 43 38 117 12

101 59 45 113 160 121

169 51 20 135 65 50

6 23 102 123

62 174 55 67 109 2 24 146 58

157 112 66 80 93

79 77 13 103 75 173 64 149 47

57 166 99 31 156

163 97 165 148 35

105 9 33 151 81 37

21 88 158 39 120 153 26 104

167 73 126 145 90 83 139 53

1 30 142 170 15 71

17 52 131 69 138 60

172 4 22 115

92 3 19 34 85 171

144 119 107 63 32 7

132 36 10 159

18 108 56 141 116 28 25

110 95 54

The New Books

(*Continued from page 20*)

of insight in the stories is quite high, and for drama—read "The Tinker's Woman," "Monte Estremo," "Lulu Gets Married," and "A Death in the Family." Several of the most "significant" stories don't seem to us quite to come off. But there is enough talent here to hold your attention.

W. R. B.

THE LAW AND THE McLAUGHLINS. By Margaret Wilson. Doubleday, Doran. 1936. $2.50.

We could not, we confess, get interested in this book. Despite the scenario which the publishers have obligingly printed in the front of the book, the novel is quite unintelligible without "The Able McLaughlins," and not too intelligible thereafter. Somebody steals some horses in frontier Iowa—that is clear, though why they steal them, or why the horse-thieves are liberated from the county jail, or why the McLaughlins get all hot and bothered about it, requires considerable detective work amid the not very pointed conversation of the novel. As the last sentence says that "the new sheriff was to have the whole State militia, if necessary, to bring him to justice," we suppose that outraged morality is eventually to be avenged, but it doesn't seem especially to matter. All in all, an extremely mediocre book.

H. M. J.

Government

NEITHER PURSE NOR SWORD. By James M. Beck and Merle Thorpe. Macmillan. 1936. $2.

"The judiciary," according to Alexander Hamilton, "has no influence over either the sword or the purse"—a highly debatable proposition, from which the title of the present volume was drawn. Undertaken jointly by former Solicitor-General James M. Beck and Merle Thorpe, it was completed by the latter after Mr. Beck's death a short time ago. In general the views expressed by the authors of "Neither Purse nor Sword" are ultra-conservative.

Eleven years ago Professor Thomas Reed Powell of Harvard wrote in his inimitable style a review entitled "Constitutional Metaphors" which dealt humorously and murderously with one of James M. Beck's earlier books on the Constitution. In it the learned authority on constitutional law pointed out that the oratorical Solicitor-General had likened our fundamental law successively but somewhat incongruously to a flaming beacon, a Gothic cathedral, and a floating dock; the Supreme Court to a balance wheel, and a great lighthouse. In the present volume additional metaphors are supplied, in flattering unction to the souls of all True Believers but not likely to make much impression upon the minds of Honest Doubters. In short, though it deals with same subjects, "Neither Purse nor Sword" can scarcely bear comparison with such recent critical and constructive works as Irving Brant's "Storm over the Constitution," Fred Rodell's "Fifty-five Men," or Henry A. Wallace's "Whose Constitution?"

R. B. B.

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